St. Paul's Problem
and its Solution

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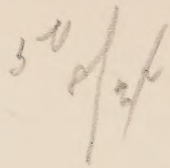

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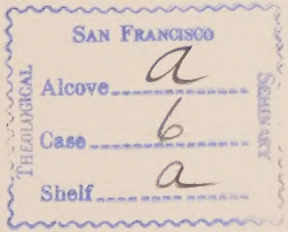
ST. PAUL'S PROBLEM

AND ITS SOLUTION

BY

FAYE HUNTINGTON



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To

THE YOUNG PEOPLE EVERYWHERE,

BANDED TOGETHER IN CHRISTIAN
ENDEAVOR,

THIS VOLUME IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED BY ONE WHO BELIEVES
THAT THE THOUGHT OF THE Y. P. S. C. E. WAS BORN OF
GOD, AND IS ORDAINED BY HIM TO MEET
A GROWING NEED IN ALL OUR
CHURCHES.

F. H.

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ST. PAUL'S PROBLEM

AND ITS SOLUTION

CHAPTER I.

"The ways of Zion do mourn because none come to the solemn feasts."

"The Amateur Entertainment Club of this church will give a Sunflower Chorus on Tuesday evening of the present week. Because of the inconvenience of the church parlor for the presentation of the programme, and because of the harmless nature of the performance, it has been thought best to open the church for the accommodation of all."

THIS notice Dr. Roberts was asked to read from the pulpit of St. Paul's Church. He did not refuse, for it had been decided officially that such things were a part of the legitimate work of the church. It had long been a serious question among the older members of the church, Who would take their places as one by one they should drop out of the ranks? There were many young people among them, who by birthright and by early association should have belonged there. A few sat with the communicants upon communion Sabbaths, but these, as well as the others, sought their social pleasures

elsewhere, and were never seen at the prayer-meeting. As the children of the church grew up they dropped out of Sunday-school and drifted away, — it would be difficult to say whither; the congregation grew smaller year by year, and the pastor mourned in secret and took counsel of his official board, How should they interest and hold their young people, and so provide for the succession? The work of disintegration was going on rapidly, and a few years at the present rate would bring them to desperate straits. To this effect spoke the pastor, adding, "Let us seek for the cause, and if a remedy can be found let us apply it."

"I have sometimes thought," said Mr. Collins, "that we were too strict with our young people. I was talking with Mrs. Grenville the other day, and she proposed to get up a series of entertainments, something to draw the young folks; once get them in, if we are easy with them we can keep them. Mrs. Grenville will take right hold and carry the idea through, if only she has the support of the officers of the church."

"What do you mean?" asked the pastor, "what sort of entertainments?"

"Well, she spoke of getting up a concert like the one they had at Millville, — I think they called it a Cantata; they sang the story of Esther right through. You see, young folks like the

fun of singing-schools, the world over. Why, when I was young we could always get out a crowd; in fact, the singing-school was the event of the winter. Now, Mrs. Grenville says these Cantatas, as they call them, take a sight of practising, and that would bring together the young people who have voices for singing, and they would get used to coming here, and I have no doubt we should get a hold upon a good many who are now outsiders."

Deacon Miller was doubtful, but others favored the idea, and as neither Deacon Miller nor any one else could suggest any more feasible plan, it was decided to take steps toward a series of evening entertainments which should have the twofold object of bringing money into the treasury and young people into the church. And thereafter, for a year or two, there was a series of brilliant entertainments. The Cantata of Queen Esther led off, followed by a Japanese wedding. This last was supposed to be illustrative of the missionary spirit of the church, while the first was of a religious character; but presently the "Peak Family," the "Sunflower Chorus," and the "Wishing Well" were introduced, and by no stretch of the imagination could any of these be classified as either religious or missionary. But was the end sought, gained? Well, in a sense; there was no lack of young

people to carry on these enterprises. "Where do they all come from?" asked one and another. "Who supposed that we had so many boys and girls among us?" But how was it upon the Sabbath? How did these things affect the Sabbath-school? There was a slight increase in the attendance. Parker Johnson must see Miss Brown, the leading soprano, and he might as well interview her at church as any way. Minnie Wilbur found it necessary to consult her partner in the duet about the dresses for the public rehearsal. Dr. Grey wanted to know if the Japanese suits had been ordered. All these matters pertained to the church entertainments; why not take the opportunity which the public gathering together of the people on the Sabbath afforded for consultation?

But did Dr. Roberts, the troubled pastor, look among this throng of busy young people for earnest Christians to take the places of those whose heads were whitening with the passing years? After two years of trial of this experiment of entertaining the boys and girls in order to hold them for the church, Dr. Roberts bowed his head in sorrow, and secretly pronounced the scheme a failure. For a time he had been encouraged by the increasing number of young faces that looked up into his own as he proclaimed gospel truths, and he had fancied

that there was a slightly increased interest in spiritual things among them. He had sought to further this interest by the appointment of a Saturday afternoon meeting in his study for religious conversation. Two or three came a few times, and then some new interest absorbed their minds; later, a young people's prayer-meeting was established, which was very well sustained for a few months; then, as the pleasant weather came on, the park, the walk by the river, the swinging hammocks, or the garden chairs were found more attractive, and the prayer-meeting was suspended. With the return of autumn, the young people were in full tide of interest over a new operetta.

"'Little Golden Hair!' Such a sweet pretty story as it is!" said Mrs. Grenville, in her call for consultation, for the people of St. Paul's always paid their pastor the compliment of consulting him. "It is a very fine composition," continued Mrs. Grenville, "and will be quite a treat to our lovers of music. It will tax the powers of our singers, but I think we shall be able to carry it through. Mr. Baxter has promised his assistance if we undertake it; and, do you know, I think Mr. Baxter is quite interested in our church! I have been wishing for something to draw him in. He will make a fine old bear! His voice is quite magnificent! I hope

that by getting him to take part in the concert we shall get a strong hold upon him and perhaps draw him into the church."

Dr. Roberts had heard a great deal in the last few months about "getting a hold upon people," and "drawing them in"; but thus far he had not seen the consummation of these hopes, and he had grown less sanguine.

"Let me tell you about the piece," continued Mrs. Grenville. "It is such a lovely thing! There is a band of fairies; and we have determined that your Nellie shall be our Queen. I assure you her voice is quite equal to the part; and so long as there is not the slightest hint of anything objectionable in it from beginning to end, you will not refuse?"

Of course Dr. Roberts could not refuse, especially when he was assured that the drill which his daughter would receive would be worth a whole term of private lessons; he felt that it would be ungrateful in him to throw away such a chance!

And so, the pastor's consent gained, the practising and the drill began. For weeks and months it went on, entertainments of lesser magnitude coming in meantime. It was while the interest was at a white heat that Colonel Hicks came one morning to the pastor's study, for a talk upon church matters. Only last week

they had laid dear old Mrs. Harmon away to rest, and now the senior deacon was dying. The old, the still unsolved question, over which they had so often studied, was again thrusting itself forward for renewed, puzzling debate. After a moment's talk about the weather, and the health of their respective families, Colonel Hicks broached, without further preliminaries, the subject of his visit: —

"I have just received a letter from my brother-in-law. He has been laboring in the western part of the state as an evangelist. His success is quite phenomenal. At Courtville, where he was last, there have been over two hundred conversions. Such a revival has not been known in that region for many years."

"Indeed!" replied Dr. Roberts, "I am glad to hear that the work is advancing in other places, though we seem to be at a stand-still, unless, indeed, we are retrograding."

"Well, that is partly what I wanted to speak about. It seems as though, with such a crowd of young people as we now have in our society, we ought to make an effort to bring them into the church."

Dr. Roberts winced; had he not been making every effort in his power to do this very thing?

CHAPTER II.

"What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?"

COLONEL HICKS proceeded to further inform Dr. Roberts.

"Mr. Munson tells me in this letter that he is quite worn out with the excessive labors of the winter, and that he will soon come here for a few weeks' rest. Now, it occurs to me that as his strength returns he might be willing to help us here. If he should have anything like the success he has had in other places, it would certainly be worth our while to join with him in an extra effort. You are, I presume, aware that his father was a former pastor of this church, and that my brother-in-law lived here as a boy. He has not visited us for more than twenty years, but I have no doubt that there are many of the older people who remember him and would be glad to hear him preach. I thought I would mention these things to you, and if you desired to take advantage of his being here you could do so."

Dr. Roberts had been the pastor of St. Paul's fifteen years. He had always considered himself

equal to the duties of the shepherd of that flock; but if he was at all wounded by the suggestions of his parishioner, he did not in the least show any feeling. He was quite ready, if the church officials thought proper, to try this method of solving the perplexing question. And an arrangement was entered into that Mr. Munson should preach as his strength permitted. Mr. Collins suggested that "The Amateurs" were now practising three evenings a week, and that extra meetings might interfere with their plans. But Colonel Hicks thought that there would be no clashing, as Mr. Munson would probably not be able to speak more than four evenings each week.

And so for a time the chapel was occupied every evening; the song of the fairies, the wail of the lost child of the forest, and the heavy bass of the old bear, alternating evening after evening with the earnest message brought to the people through Mr. Munson. It was the old message, the divine message, coming often through imperfect mediums, yet losing nothing thereby of its purity, nothing of its solemnity; it was in varied form that old and startling message, "Prepare to meet thy God."

It was a disappointment and regret to Dr. Roberts, as well as to Mr. Munson, that so few came to hear the message. The singers were

too tired for church-going. The long stretch of practice was beginning to have its effect upon them, and, feeling that there was a limit to their endurance, they very naturally drew the line at the door of the prayer-meeting. And hence they sang and rested upon alternate evenings. But there came an evening when they were all there. Dr. Roberts lifted his heart in thankfulness as one after another dropped in. He said within himself, "God forgive my lack of faith in his movement! The influence of these meetings has evidently gone out far beyond my hopes, and the hearts of my dear young people are being moved upon."

But it turned out that the presence of these unwonted attendants upon the extra service was accounted for upon an entirely different basis. Mr. Baxter must leave town for a few days, and an extra rehearsal was considered necessary. Mr. Baxter himself very respectfully suggested to Mr. Munson — privately — that the singers would feel very grateful to Mr. Munson if he would shorten the meeting somewhat, in order to give them time for an hour's practice. This request Mr. Munson quietly ignored, and seemed to speak with unusual fervor, as if he would, if possible, reach out and save some soul. Mr. Baxter frowned, twisted uneasily about in his seat, snapped the case of

his watch frequently, yawned and turned over the leaves of the music which he had brought with him into that sacred place. It was a most uncomfortable evening for several persons. As Dr. Roberts at last observed Mr. Baxter's rudeness, he felt hurt and annoyed; Mrs. Grenville was troubled by the same thing, though in a different way; she was sweetly sorry that Mr. Munson had not seen fit to comply with Mr. Baxter's request, and cut the meeting short; it would be such an unfortunate thing to seriously offend Mr. Baxter just at the present juncture — of course as a gentleman pledged to see them through with the operetta, he could not desert them — but it would be very sad if he should be driven away from the church by the mistaken zeal of a stranger. But through the annoyance of the sad-hearted pastor, the surly vexation of the grim old bear, and the sweet regret of the class represented by Mrs. Grenville, the words of Life rang out, clear and distinct. No one present need make any mistake as to his duty or privilege; and, in spite of all the hindrances, that evening's work would one day be found to have been not in vain. Seed was sown in more than one heart, and, though there must yet be much watering and tilling about, the fruitage would appear.

One thing had been noticeable; not one of

the singers had opened their lips to help on the song service, until in the last hymn Clara Randall's voice rang out sweet and clear. Mr. Baxter looked around and frowned more surlily than before. Had he not again and again urged that during these last days of preparation they should sing nothing but their parts? The idea that Clara Randall should waste her power upon a prayer-meeting hymn! It was the old, old hymn of penitence and consecration, and when the fair young girl sang,

> "Here, Lord, I give myself away;
> 'Tis all that I can do,"

only God and Clara Randall knew that in that hour she sang her soul into the kingdom; that the words of the hymn were the language of her own heart; that for the first time in her life the words she sang had a meaning for her. Flossie Miller, who sat beside her, looked up in surprise and wondered what had come over Clara to sing like that in a prayer-meeting! But not until long after did she know what had come to her friend. Never were two girls more unlike than these two, whom I may as well introduce now as any time. The young people of St. Paul's will need no elaborate introduction; as you come to know them better, they will speak for themselves. Flossie Miller and Clara Ran-

dall were a strong contrast in person, in character, in manner, and in home surroundings and early training. Clara had never known what it was to kneel beside a mother and repeat the infant's prayer or lisp "Our Father." She had never heard from a mother's lips the sweet story of how Jesus took the children in his arms. She had never knelt at the family altar and heard a father's petitions as they went up to the throne of God bringing down blessings upon the household. She had not been brought early to the house of God by her parents, for they seldom entered the church themselves; but through a friendship formed at school with Flossie Miller, the daughter of earnest Christian parents, Clara had been led into the Sunday-school, and, her remarkable voice having attracted the attention of Mrs. Grenville, she had been invited to sing in the operetta. All through Flossie's childhood the questioning of the parent's hearts had been, "How shall we order the child?" And yet, as they went out from that meeting together Clara's heart was repeating over and over the refrain,

> "Help me, dear Saviour, thee to own,
> And ever faithful be,"

while Flossie hummed a bar of the fairy song which they had been rehearsing. Would their

paths, which had strangely come together, again diverge from this point?

Well, the operetta was over at last. It was a thing of the days gone by, and St. Paul's more than ever enjoyed the reputation of getting up the most unique, the most elaborate, and the most enjoyable entertainments of any society in town.

Clara Randall had gone on to the weary end. It had never occurred to her to do otherwise, though she had come to hate the whole thing; and Mr. Baxter declared that she had spoiled her voice by singing at the revival meetings! But, on the whole, the affair was pronounced a success, and financially it was so, netting a large sum, which went to the purchasing of a new Sunday-school library. The object had in view from the inception of the scheme through to the end, the retaining of Mr. Baxter, seemed to be accomplished, and Mrs. Grenville was triumphant. He remained in the choir, and sang magnificent solos, wrote notes upon the fly leaves of the hymn books to the soprano singer, passed caramels between the hymns, and often slipped out during the sermon to indulge in a cigar, returning in time for the last singing. Perhaps it was something to have him in church at all — perhaps it paid! As to the direct results of Mr. Munson's visit and labors, about

twenty young people entered into covenant relations with the church. Among the number were Clara Randall and Walter Grenville; but Mr. Baxter came not, neither did Flossie Miller.

CHAPTER III.

"I have heard thy prayers; I have seen thy tears."

MONTHS went by. Dr. Roberts was still troubled. True, there were more young people among them, yet things were not moving off as he expected and wished. There had been an increase in membership; the old fear that the church was dying out was removed, but the new members did not seem to get to work. The young people's meeting dragged. It was next to impossible to secure leaders for it from among the young people. A few of the young ladies sometimes went through the form of leading, with fear and trembling, but it was all up-hill work. Walter Grenville was a great comfort to his pastor; he was always ready for any service which Dr. Roberts might ask. The consecration of his young life to the Master had been no half-way measure; he was in dead earnest. But his mother did not think it wise to put a boy of fifteen forward too much, especially in the line of prayer-meetings; though just why it should be more proper to sing and play his violin in public, and to act

the part of Santa Claus or Rip Van Winkle, than to offer prayer in the young people's meeting may not be clear to ordinary minds.

Among the young people was one who especially troubled Dr. Roberts. Fred Castleton could have been a great help in more than one way, but he seemed to shirk all religious work. When urged to lead the meeting, he said, —

"Really, I cannot; I am not fitted for such a position. Besides, I do not consider it my business."

"Whose business is it?" asked Dr. Roberts.

"Well, if you will excuse me for saying what I think, I should say it was the pastor's place to do that sort of work."

This was at the close of a long conversation, and Dr. Roberts turned sadly away from the young man, saying: —

"Well, Fred, if that is the way you look at it, I shall not urge you further, nor annoy you by asking you again. If ever you come to feel that it is your business, we shall only be too glad to have you take up the work."

Fred Castleton was the only son of wealthy parents. Perhaps it is not surprising that he was a little spoiled. At nineteen he was a handsome, agreeable young fellow, thinking a good deal more than was strictly necessary about being well dressed, — mark me, I do not

say he dressed too well, but that he thought too much about the matter. He was a little arbitrary and conceited in his opinions, very much taken up with the delusions of the world, spending much time on dancing and amateur theatricals, forgetting the sober realities of life, neglecting both business and religion. He had within him the possibilities of a grand success, but he was deliberately throwing these possibilities away upon trivialities! He was likely to turn out a social butterfly, brilliant, to be sure, but a butterfly still!

It was the holiday season. Fred was visiting friends in the small town of Elmore. He was enjoying the festivities of the season, and yet no thought of their meaning entered his mind. Indeed, as you by this time understand, the greater part of his thought was given to Fred Castleton. Would he go on to the end of the year and enter upon another with no remembrance of the responsibilities resting upon him? Would there be anything in the glad Christmas service, anything in the grand music, or in the decorations of the house of God, to awaken in him a sense of the great truth set forth by all the services of the sanctuary, by all the home festivities? As they sang and talked of the Holy Child Jesus, would there come to him no promptings to a purer, holier life? Alas! it

would seem that few were less likely to be moved. He was too well satisfied with his life!

For a moment leave Fred Castleton and go with me into the study of Dr. Roberts. He too was in the midst of the Christmas festival. His address for the evening lay upon the table before him, ready for delivery. He knew that the music under the management of Mrs. Grenville and the trained choir would be all that could be desired; that the decorations were elaborate; and that the gifts for the Sunday-school had been selected with great care; and yet he was in an unusually troubled state of mind. He had gone over his finished production in a final review, and there had come over him a sense of lack.

"I cannot better it," he had said. "If now the Holy Spirit would but put life into the dead words; if only thus I could make them reach the hearts of our young people! There are some who are members of our communion, who, while performing the outward duties of a religious life, seem to have little or no real spiritual vigor. How shall I awaken in them a desire for better things?"

We may not speak or write of that hour in the study, that time of wrestling in prayer; but I may tell you how that prayer, in at least one instance, was answered; how, hundreds of miles

away, agencies were at work bringing about the answer! How before the new year should dawn a fire would be kindled in one heart which should ere long spread and burn in other hearts in St. Paul's communion. That hour of wrestling in prayer was not to be in vain, though the answer should come through an unexpected channel.

Fred Castleton was enjoying the gayety and gladness of this Christmas tide, yet in a way unusual to him. The atmosphere of his cousin's home was different from that of his own home; there was the same culture and refinement, the same elegance of furnishing and luxury of living, and yet he felt a difference which as yet he was unable to define. His was a Christian home; so was this in which he was spending these few bright days. In his own home religion was rarely made a subject of conversation; here it was a common topic. And, too, he heard things talked of which he did not at all understand. For instance, in their plans for the week was a sleighing party, and in reference to it his cousin Satie said, "We must leave Forestville by four o'clock, because it is the evening of the Christian Endeavor meeting."

Again, cousin John said, "The prayer-meeting committee have a meeting this evening, so

I must ask you to excuse me for an hour. As I am chairman of the committee, it is quite important that I should be present."

These remarks, and similar ones, were so often repeated that Fred grew quite curious as to their meaning, and yet not enough interested to question. The sleigh-ride came off, and upon their return his cousin said, —

"Are you too much used up to go with us to the harvest meeting at the chapel?"

"Harvest meeting!" said Fred. "Seems to me you are rather late with that. I heard of several this fall, but I did not know they belonged to Christmas week!"

"Well, ours is different," replied John. "You'd better go with us and see what it is like. Perhaps you will get some new ideas about harvest meetings."

"Well, I'll go with you with pleasure, though I have not much interest in harvest festivals. Pumpkins and squashes and strings of corn and heaps of potatoes and turnips are not to my taste."

Fred, putting on his overcoat and groping about for his overshoes, did not notice the significant smile with which his cousin John greeted Satie, who just then came down stairs in cloak and hat, ready for the short walk to the chapel.

CHAPTER IV.

"Where hast thou gleaned to-day?"

THE room was very full, and, to Fred's surprise, the company were all seated as if for a service or lecture. Indeed, as the trio were brushing off the snow in the vestibule, the triumphant refrain, "Bringing in the sheaves," sung by happy young voices, was a surprise to Fred Castleton, and he whispered:

"Do you have a religious service at your festivals? That is the way they used to do always at the old-fashioned sewing-circles that I have heard grandmother tell about. She thinks we have degenerated because we do not have a prayer at our sociables; she would think this is heaven."

This flippant speech Fred rattled off, while he and Satie waited for John, who stopped for a moment's consultation with "a member of his committee," as Satie explained.

"Oh, of course," said Fred. "You are an army of committees! Your society seems to have considerable machinery."

"And power to run it!" replied Satie, smiling.

"And material to work upon, too, I suppose?" said Fred.

John, having ended his consultation, opened the door, and they passed into the bright, cheery chapel. They found vacant chairs near the centre of the room, and Fred, for once in his life slightly perplexed and embarrassed, looked in vain for the strings of corn and piles of vegetables which he had expected to see. A young man scarcely beyond boyhood was at the desk. He was reading the one hundred and twenty-sixth Psalm. As he finished, he said: —

"We have come together to-night for the last meeting of the year, to talk over the work of the last twelve months. We began with the first of January to get ready for this meeting; we said then, in response to a suggestion of our pastor, that we would do what we could, and that we would at this time come together to report progress in the Christian life and in Christian work. We named this 'a harvest meeting' because we hoped to have some sheaves to lay at the Master's feet. Some of us have gone into the whitened fields to reap: some have only gleaned behind the reapers and in the fence-corners. To some it has been appointed to wait in enforced idleness; and to one the summons has come to lay down the work and go away from earth. After prayer,

we will speak to one another of our experiences; in other words, we will 'bring in our sheaves' and lay them before the Master. Bertie, will you lead us in prayer, asking the especial presence of the Holy Spirit?"

The prayer, coming from the lips of a boy not more than sixteen, was short, simple, and direct. Then, after singing, the leader said, "For myself, I bring a song of victory — victory over my besetting sin! Many of you know something about my hasty temper, and you will rejoice with me that for a few months past I have, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, been enabled to hold it in check, and the honor of this victory I bring to him to-night."

Another voice took up the story: "I come to-night with a bundle of answered prayers. Five of my Sunday-school class have during the past few weeks given themselves to Christ. Though others may have been in some measure instrumental in leading them to a decision, yet I can but believe that it has come about in answer to my earnest prayers, and I am encouraged to labor and pray more faithfully in the coming year."

A pale-faced, slender boy said, "I have, as you know, not been able to go out into the field to work actively for the Master, but I have, in

the months while I have been shut in, been gleaning from God's Word, and I have to-night a stronger faith in his promises; I have tried some of them, and found them unfailing."

A sweet, childish voice broke the moment's stillness, "I have given myself to Jesus."

Then a young lady: "My Master set me a lesson of patience to learn, and though I have had to turn back many times and learn it over again, I know that I have gained something and it is easier now, and I trust that he will accept my efforts to accomplish the task."

"I am asked to speak for five of us who constitute the Relief Committee." The young man who spoke had been sitting near Fred Castleton, and, as he rose, Fred looked him over from head to feet. He was plainly dressed and had a plain face, yet there was something in his voice and manner which held the attention of the critic. Voice, face, and manner had in them strength and humility, and as he spoke of the work of the committee among the poor and suffering, there was not the slightest hint of a boasting spirit, and the impression made upon the mind of the hearer was that here were earnest souls, intent upon doing good, not for their own glory, nor for the honor of the society to which they belonged, but simply for "Jesus' sake," and the concluding words of the speaker

were in this spirit; "We have felt we might look forward to hearing our Master one day saying, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me.'"

It was John Castleton who said, "In this season of gift-making, it is fitting that we bring our gifts to Him whose birthday we celebrate. Indeed, if we follow out the true idea of Christmas, all our gift-making will be in His name and for His sake. But let us especially bring to Him one gift such as we give to no other. Let us give our hearts anew to Him, let us consecrate our life's service to Him. For myself, I would bring to Him in this hour, when we offer our humble tributes, all the efforts of the year, with all the failures, and ask Him to make of them something of beauty for the adorning of the heavenly temple, for our failures even, when the effort has been in the spirit of love, may be successes in His sight."

And so one after another brought their tribute of love. In the hour allotted to the meeting, more than fifty voices were heard in remark or prayer. Fred Castleton had never in his life been in such an atmosphere. His ideas of a young people's meeting were very different. Quite early in the evening he saw his mistake in supposing that this harvest meeting was an entertainment, such as he had been

accustomed to attend, and he also made the discovery that there may be vast differences in prayer-meetings! The words spoken and the prayers offered were simple. There was nothing of profound thought, nothing of eloquence; but when the spirit of God takes the words, and, breathing upon them, carries them into the heart, they become a power, no matter how plain and homely. And Fred Castleton, sitting there, listening to the heart offerings of even the children, bowed his head in very shame! What offering had *he* to bring to Christ upon this His birthday season! Would the Saviour smile in approbation upon him, his professed servant? What had he to bring as the fruits of righteousness? And when presently the money-offerings were gathered up, he thought to have a chance, but the names were called and the envelopes deposited, and again he was left out!

CHAPTER V.

"What shall I render unto the Lord?"

IT was Monday evening of the week of prayer. The interest of this chapter centres in that prayer-meeting. The services of the preceding Sabbath had been of great interest; Dr. Roberts had preached with unusual power both morning and evening. True, the prayer-meeting before the evening preaching service had dragged a little. But it was much after the usual order of the prayer-meetings at St. Paul's. The pastor and a deacon or two did the most of the talking and praying. At the week-day evening meeting they always had singing to enliven the service, for Dr. Roberts could and would sing, even though he sang alone, but upon Sunday evenings he felt obliged to be careful of his voice, and sometimes there was no one to sing; for the young people did not much frequent this meeting, and Mrs. Grenville and Mr. Baxter could not be expected to waste their magnificence upon a prayer-meeting audience. And though Dr. Roberts was able to throw off

the depression which this hour brought, so that, as I have said, he preached with more than usual earnestness, yet his heart sang no triumphant strain as he sat before the open fire in his study at nine o'clock. His wife, noticing his weary air, said : —

"John, I think it is the early meeting that tires you. If I were in your place, I would stay at home and let Mr. Miller lead it ; you need the hour for rest."

"It does not tire me," replied the doctor, "but it does discourage me. The truth is, Carrie, the prayer-meetings are the most disheartening part of my work. There are so few helpers ; we have no *real* prayer-meeting, according to my idea of what such a meeting should be. It has come to be little more than a lecture by the pastor. If only I could hit upon some scheme for training up prayer-meeting supporters, I should feel that a great want was about to be supplied. But we have tried young people's classes and young people's meetings, and made only failures. I used to think that the Sabbath-school and the public services were a sufficient means of Christian nurture, but I begin to think that we need something more."

"I think the people liked your sermon to-night," said Mrs. Roberts, by way of soothing and encouraging her disturbed husband. But

he was not a man susceptible to flattery, and he replied: —

"Yes, I think so myself; they liked it, as you say, but will there be any fruit?" After a moment's pause he added, "This will be a hard week. The week of prayer ought to mean a week of praying by the church, but it has come to mean, in our church, a week of talking by the pastor."

"Well, then, it is a good thing that you are equal to almost any amount of talk," said Mrs. Roberts, cheerily.

Monday morning brought a heavy snow-storm, and all day the feathery flakes, trying to find their way to the earth, were blown hither and thither, unable to find a resting-place until at length the eddying whirls deposited millions of them in a great bank, and other millions, seeking the shelter of some kindly wall, banked themselves in great white drifts. The winds howled now in their fierceness, and again moaned through the naked trees as if in grief. Only now and then one was brave enough to face the wild storm, and when just at nightfall the sexton came to ask if he should light up the chapel and ring the bell, Dr. Roberts hesitated.

"I presume no one will venture out in this storm," he said, "yet — yes, you may light the chapel and ring the bell; we will do our part,

though it seems useless; but who knows? a blessing may follow!"

The old sexton grumbled a little as he waded through the drifts, but a thought of the crisp five-dollar bill which Dr. Roberts had slipped into his hand upon Christmas morning, with the words, "A little token of my appreciation of your favors to me personally," caused the growl to end in a cheery laugh, as he followed the uneven path in the wake of the snow-plough.

St. Paul's was the only bell in the village that rang that night, the other pastors having concluded that it would not be worth while to try to have a service upon such an unpleasant evening: and because it was the only one it was the more noticeable as its loud, clear tones rang out above the storm.

"Why, that is our bell!" said one and another; "I did not suppose there would be a meeting!" And, to their credit be it recorded, there were many who obeyed the call; and yet it must not be set down to the discredit of the rest that they did not answer the summoning bell, for there were those who dared not risk the exposure, who would gladly have joined the little company that awaited the pastor's coming.

Very early that morning, Fred Castleton left his cousin's home to begin his homeward journey. Delayed by the storm, the train was late

in getting in, and Fred had scarcely greeted his own family when the bell rang.

"Anybody going to church!" he asked, quite as a matter of course.

"Dear me! not in this storm!" replied his mother, a little surprised that he should notice the ringing of the church-bell.

"It is not so very bad when once you are out," responded Fred; "I'll take care of anybody who wants to go. Come, Edith, put on your wraps, and we will fight the storm-king together."

Now, Edith Castleton did not care in the least about the prayer-meeting, but she was young and vigorous, and a snow-storm had no terrors for her; on the contrary, she delighted to battle with the rollicking tempest, and almost before Mrs. Castleton had time to protest, had she not been too much astonished to do so, the brother and sister were tearing down the hill at a racing pace. The bell ceased to toll as they reached the chapel door. Dr. Roberts looked up as they entered, and his thought was, "Well, those two people are the last ones I should have counted upon as likely to be here to-night! I wonder what prompted them to come!"

Ah, Dr. Roberts! may it not be that the secret of the prompting lay away back ten days ago, in that hour of wrestling in your own study!

The meeting progressed after the accustomed order; the topic was announced, the Scripture lesson read, a prayer offered, hymns were sung, and Dr. Roberts made somewhat extended remarks, and made the usual announcement that the meeting was open to all; whereupon the fraction of St. Paul's there assembled experienced a sensation! Fred Castleton had risen; he was speaking! And this is what he was saying: —

"I have just reached home, and I hastened to this meeting to tell you of a new experience which has come to me. A revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ and his wonderful love, such as I have never had before, and this is how it came to me." Then he told of that "harvest meeting," of the sheaves which those present brought to lay before the Master, how he was left out of it all, because he had nothing to bring! He spoke of his shame and regret for the wasted opportunities; he told also of new desires and growing purposes, and he then said, "Dear Christian friends, I have been an unworthy member of the church of Christ. I confess that when I united with the church it was because I was urged to do so, on the ground that it was my duty, and I realize now that it was in an unbecoming spirit of condescension. I took the step as a duty, not as a privilege.

To-night I wonder at your patience and at the patience of my Master, and if the Lord Jesus will let me do any work for Him, however humble, I shall esteem it the highest honor that can come to me."

The people of St. Paul's were decorous and well bred and self-controlled. Though hearts were stirred by the unexpected words of the young man, though they believed in him, they gave no sign other than that tears were hastily brushed away, and it may be that Deacon Miller's voice trembled slightly as he rose to pray, and that there was a deeper earnestness than usual in Mr. Gibson's closing prayer, but that was all the encouragement Fred received, until Dr. Roberts grasped his hand at the close of the meeting and in a husky voice said, "Fred, I was glad to hear you to-night!"

And Fred replied, "Dr. Roberts, try to forget some things, and, if you need me, use me."

CHAPTER VI.

"Ask counsel of God."

FRED CASTLETON, visiting his pastor's study without a special invitation, talking over with Dr. Roberts the interests of the young people of their church, was a surprise to the elder gentleman, and indeed I think he was a surprise to himself.

He was saying, "They gave me a copy of the Constitution of the Young People's Society in Elmore, and I have brought it down to-day for you to look over. It seems a good thing, and I thought perhaps we could use it as a model. They call *their* society 'The Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor.'"

"That is a pretty good name," said Dr. Roberts, as he took the printed copy of the "Constitution and By-Laws of the Y. P. S. C. E. of Elmore." He was saying within himself that he must move very cautiously in the matter brought before him. Here, on the one hand, was this young man with his new-born zeal; he must be careful not to say or do anything to dampen his ardor; on the other hand, the good

Doctor was suspicious of the wisdom of all organizations within the church. True, there was the Woman's Missionary, but the Board was back of that, and I may remark incidentally that the Woman's Missionary Society of St. Paul's would never have troubled Dr. Roberts; there was scarcely enough of it for him to be aware of its existence. But he felt that it would not do to take up every new scheme which might strike the fancy of the young people. They had tried to run a mission band, but what had become of it Dr. Roberts would have found it hard to tell. Then a Band of Hope was started, connected with the Sunday-school; but that too was one of the things of the past. And, in view of these failures, Dr. Roberts felt that they ought to very carefully weigh the matter before attempting to start a new society. Besides, there were "the Amateurs," and he remarked to Fred that they already had one society or club; they must be careful not to do anything to interfere with that organization.

"Oh, you will find this very different," said Fred; "there will be no possibility of any interference. The aims and methods of the two organizations would be entirely different. There are some remarkable features about this thing, as you will see when you look into it."

"There seems to be considerable to look into," remarked the pastor, as he turned over the leaves of the little pamphlet. And then he added, "I will go through it this evening, and then if you will run in after a day or two we will talk it over."

The truth being that at this juncture Dr. Roberts felt the need of a consultation with his wife. And hence, though Fred would have set about the work of organization within an hour, he was obliged to await the slower decision of the older man; and, if he had only known it, he might have been content to wait, for Mrs. Roberts looked favorably upon the scheme from the first.

"Why, John!" she said, "isn't it delightful! It is just what you have been wishing for! It seems as if Providence had put this into your hands all ready for use!"

"What I have been wishing for! Carrie, what do you mean?"

"Why, how many times have I heard you say that there would have to be some methods beyond those we now employ for carrying forward the Christian training of our young people, and here you have it all mapped out, ready for you to put into execution."

"Yes," responded the good Doctor, slowly, "the plan is certainly elaborately worked up;

the thing would be to carry it out. The trouble with it is there is so much of it. I am afraid we should find it cumbersome."

"I don't think so. Don't you see that it is a musical, a literary, a missionary, a temperance, and *what-not* society, all circling about a prayer-meeting!"

"Your 'what-not' is well put in," said the Doctor, laughing.

"Well, just think of our young people all pledged to attend a weekly prayer-meeting, and pledged too to take part in the meeting! It would be delightful!" said the enthusiastic woman.

"I fear it could not be done," replied Dr. Roberts. "Our young people are not of that stamp of Christians."

"I don't know about that. If they are Christians at all, very few will hesitate when it comes to the test point. They will show themselves to be of a different type from what you think. What a great many need is opportunity, — something to call them out, — and here, it seems to me, we shall have it."

"But we have tried young people's meetings."

"Yes; but, my dear, there is a fascination about the idea of a society, and a power in organization."

"But we have had societies."

"Yes; but never one with a prayer-meeting as the central thought. I wonder if this idea was original with the Elmore people."

"I am not sure, but I think I have heard something of this organization. The name has a familiar sound, though I did not notice it at first."

Rising as he spoke, Dr. Roberts took from the shelf devoted to pamphlets a pile of that class of literature and began to turn them over rapidly; and, presently, shaking the dust from a neatly printed little book which had the appearance of never having been opened, he read, "Annual Conference of the Young People's Societies of Christian Endeavor."

Just then Mrs. Roberts was summoned from the study to meet a caller, and when, some time after, she returned, she found her husband so absorbed in the little book as not to notice her entrance. Laying her hand upon his shoulder, she said: —

"Well?"

"Carrie, there is more to this matter than I supposed. Sit down, and let me read to you this article: 'What the society is; how it works; and how to start a society.'"

As he finished the reading, Mrs. Roberts exclaimed: —

"And this has been lying up there for no one knows how long, biding its time! How queer that Fred had to go hundreds of miles and bring back to us just what we had right here all the while!"

"But Fred brought somethimg else!" said the pastor, softly.

"I know; and, John, things do 'work together!' This report did not interest you by itself, and all that Fred brought home did not convince you of the feasibility of the scheme; but all together have done the work."

"How do you know I am convinced now?"

"Oh, when you say, 'Sit down and let me read this to you,' I know you have found something which accords with your views," replied Mrs. Roberts, laughing. "You may as well own that you have determined to introduce this 'cumbersome machinery' and set it going. I think you will find we have power to run it."

At this juncture Fred Castleton appeared. He had been unable to curb his impatience, and thought he would just drop in a moment to see how Dr. Roberts was taking to the new idea.

"Ah, Fred, glad to see you! Now, who shall be our first president? A great deal will depend upon getting the right start."

"Then you like it!" exclaimed Fred, joyfully.

"I like the idea; but whether I shall like its workings amongst us will depend upon how it works. There will have to be strenuous efforts put forth on the part of somebody. I should dislike very much to make a failure of it."

"We will not fail!" said Fred, earnestly. "I tell you, Dr. Roberts, there is good stuff in us, as I think you will find out."

"Suppose," said Mrs. Roberts, "that we call Nellie, and resolve ourselves into a committee, and plan for the calling of a meeting of the young people for organization."

Nellie Roberts laid aside her Latin grammar at her mother's call, and came down stairs to the first committee meeting of the Y. P. S. C. E., to be.

"Let us pray," said Dr. Roberts.

CHAPTER VII.

"And they all . . . began to make excuse."

THE Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor of St. Paul's Church was an assured fact! Not without hindrances at almost every point had the organization been effected; there were shoals of prejudice between or around which they must steer, and bars of suspicion mingled with a little jealousy which must be avoided, but Dr. Roberts proved himself to be a skilful pilot, and the little enterprise was at length fairly under way. As to how it was accomplished, perhaps I cannot do better than to devote a little space to this matter of organizing a Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, for I hope to show you the workings of this society in such a light that some of my readers will be led to make a move in this direction.

Having carefully studied his copy of the report which had so long awaited this bringing to the light, and having thus learned what he could of the organization, Dr. Roberts gave a notice on Sabbath morning to this effect: All

who were interested in the young people, and who were desirous of helping forward a movement in the line of their Christian training, were requested to meet with the young people and children in the chapel for half an hour before the evening service. The officers of the church were especially requested to be present. At the hour the chapel was filled. All, excepting a few with whom the pastor had conferred, were curious; some, besides being curious, were interested and hopeful; while to their curiosity a few added suspicion, though the majority of this class stayed away, reserving their growls for a later period. Dr. Roberts stated the object of the meeting, giving a brief and simple account of the aims and pledges of the Society of Christian Endeavor, reading portions of the Constitution, speaking plainly of his anxiety concerning the Christian nurture of the young, and of his hope that in this society they would find the help for which they had been so long seeking. Should they have it? For himself, he very much desired to make a trial of the workings of this organization, and called upon those who sympathized with him in these views to give an expression of their approval by a rising vote. He was surprised and gratified to find a large majority of those present voting affirmatively.

It was not Dr. Roberts' purpose to complete the organization at this time, as he thought it more fitting that the election of officers and other busines should be deferred until a week-day evening. Therefore, after a few preliminaries which seemed important, the meeting was adjourned until Tuesday evening. The bell tolled for the preaching service, and there was no time then for comments; but later discussion ran high.

Mr. Collins voted for the trial of the plan because, Dr. Roberts having set his heart upon it, it was bound to be tried, and he wished to act in harmony with his pastor always. But he doubted the wisdom of encouraging the young folks in going off by themselves. He was afraid there would be rivalry, and that the boys and girls would take too much upon themselves, and any way it would never be a success. The boys would make a disturbance and break up the whole thing. No, no, it would never do! It could not be done! And I think that to this day Mr. Collins has never quite understood how it was done in spite of his croaking.

Colonel Hicks was one of those who had been conspicuous by having retained his seat. He did *not* vote for the society, because he saw no need for it. If he understood it, the main thing was a prayer-meeting. The church prayer-

meeting was open to the young people; he was sure there was always room enough for them. And if they wanted to talk in meeting no one would object, though he did not believe in boys and girls putting themselves forward. To tell the truth, I do not think Colonel Hicks believed much in boys and girls; and to whisper another truth, the one object in which he did believe was — Colonel Hicks.

Among the young people there was considerable enthusiasm, though several upon whom Dr. Roberts and Fred Castleton had confidently counted turned their backs upon the scheme. And when Dr. Roberts said to Mr. Burrill, "I thought you would be one to help us in this matter," that gentleman replied, "Well, to tell you the truth, I have no faith in the thing! And I have once or twice been drawn into an affair of the kind without knowing exactly what I was about, to have the mortification of being identified with a failure, and I thought I would keep out this time. I am told that similar organizations have been tried, even in this church, only to be thrown up after a short run."

"Mr. Burrill, you are a business man, and, though classed among the successful ones, yet I presume you sometimes embark in enterprises which turn out disastrously."

Mr. Burrill winced at this, and thought within himself, "I wonder if Dr. Roberts knows that I had shares in that mining company?"

Dr. Roberts continued, unaware how closely his remarks fitted: "And did you sit down with folded hands and declare that you would never again embark in a business enterprise? That is not the way the world moves; it is not the way in which advances are made in science, in discovery, or in reform. Our failures must be made our ladders by which to climb higher. We may fail in this thing, but we shall not consider ourselves disgraced or ruined if we do."

Parker Johnson said, "I have no objections to the society, but I cannot sign that pledge. I have never taken part in a prayer-meeting without thinking that I would never do it again; I have no talent for it, and I could not promise to do it at every meeting. I wish the society success, but I cannot join it."

And the same in substance was said by other earnest Christians. Yet Dr. Roberts was not discouraged. Or perhaps I should say Mrs. Roberts was not discouraged; she had faith in these young people, and believed that they would not persist in standing aloof.

Clara Randall found a stumbling-block in her way. When she came to study the Constitu-

tion carefully she said, "That phrase, 'absolute necessity,' troubles me."

"What do you understand by the expression?" asked Dr. Roberts.

"I understand it to be as strong a word as can be used. It means that I promise to go unless it is impossible ; and it might be possible, — for instance, I suppose I might crawl there if I was unable to walk!"

"Do you think the Master would require that of you?" asked Dr. Roberts.

"Well, you know that sometimes when my brother is away I have no one to go down street with me, and mother does not consider it safe or proper for me to go out alone evenings ; yet if it were what she considered a case of absolute necessity, if some one were very ill and a physician must be brought, I should go without a thought of fear. Then again, my father would come down after me if I insisted upon attending the meeting, but he is not well and dislikes very much to go out evenings, and I feel as though I ought not to trouble him."

"My child, duties never conflict. As you have often heard, you owe it to your parents to yield to their wishes and to their comfort, and you have no right to risk your own safety. Do you not see that 'inconsistency' is impossibility in the Christian's vocabulary?"

"Then why put it that way? Why not say —" and here Clara hesitated, seeking for a word.

"Well," said Dr. Roberts, smiling, "do you find a better expression? I have studied it, but I cannot better it. If you interpret it as meaning, 'unless prevented by a reason which you would be willing to lay before Christ' as an excuse in the expectation of its acceptance, it is not too strong, is it?"

Another objection was strongly put by Mr. Burrill: "There were so few young men in the church that the work would fall very heavily upon them."

To this, Dr. Roberts replied, "This is a society in which young ladies may act upon committees and even be chosen as officers; and then you forget that we have a crowd of boys growing up amongst as, and it is these boys who will soon be our young men, and we must train them for the work which will fall upon them."

But Mr. Burrill could not be convinced that a society made up largely of young ladies and boys could amount to anything worth while.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."

MISS BROWN, the soprano singer of St. Paul's choir, was in deep thought; she stood leaning against the dressing-bureau in her own room. Her attitude, the expression of her countenance, and the occasional deep-drawn breath, told of a conflict going on in her soul. She has just come in from the first regular meeting of the new organization. The officers had been elected; thus, Dr. Roberts, as chairman of the meeting, had appointed a nominating committee, who named the persons whom they deemed most fit for officers, and these were voted in by the society. Afterwards the officers became a nominating committee, whose duty it was to name the working committees, and, their report having been accepted, the new society was in working order. The newly elected president entered upon his duties with surprising vigor.

"I must find out how this thing works," he said to those whom he called his "cabinet officers," namely, the chairmen of the various

committees, "and then we must make it work!"

Dr. Grey had been made the presiding officer. He had never led a prayer-meeting in his life; indeed, he had not been a very regular prayer-meeting attendant, but, as Dr. Roberts said, he had many of the requisites of a good general, and as soon as he could muster his forces, an advance all along the line might be expected. In concert with his prayer-meeting committee, headed by Mrs. Roberts, he had pushed the work of preparing and printing topics for three months, which, with copies of the Constitution, were ready for distribution at his first regular meeting.

Miss Brown could not have told what prompted her to go to that meeting. Fred Castleton, as chairman of the Lookout Committee, had invited her to join the Y. P. S. C. E., and she had laughingly replied that, having once learned to repeat the alphabet in regular order, she saw no especial advantage in learning it in a promiscuous order. C. L. S. C. had almost been too much for her, and here was a double and twisted combination! And though Fred tried to present the matter seriously, she would not be serious, and, somewhat disheartened for the hour, Fred went his way to wonder why a young woman like Miss Brown would be

so frivolous. Perhaps no one was more surprised than he, unless it was Miss Brown herself, when she came into the chapel that evening. Dr. Grey led the meeting, and, in the course of his remarks, he again set forth the aim of the society, dwelling upon the conditions of membership, explaining the difference between Active and Associate members, as to qualification, duties, and pledges. And at the close of the meeting he said: —

"Now let us be truly 'Active members'; let us work with a will, and let us make the letters Y. P. S. C. E. familiar as household words, by constant repetition in our prayers. They mean something, and let us seek to live out their meaning in 'Christian Endeavor.'"

Many lingered, some to ask questions, some to sign the Constitution, either as Active or Associate members, but Miss Brown walked quickly out, and went home to think.

New ideas had taken up their abode with her! This combination of letters which she had ridiculed *meant something!* Ah, yes, she could see that! Already the idea had taken a hold upon the hearts of the young people; she had been astonished at what she had heard that evening, and now as she stood there with the printed Constitution spread out before her, she was deeply moved. It was not the pledge

which disturbed *her.* A course of action once decided upon, the carrying out of the settled purpose was easy with a person of her temperament. But here was a decision to be made. She could stand aloof and have nothing to do with the movement as she had intended to do, if she could be said to have had any intention in the matter, but some way — she did not stop to think how — she had come to the state of mind in which it was taken for granted that she was to join the society. But in what relation? This was the question which troubled her. She had not thought to class herself among Christians, yet could she by joining as an Associate member say she "was not willing yet to be known as a Christian"?

Miss Brown's home was not a Christian home. She once said, "My father has always taught us that to try to do right, to live honestly and uprightly, is all that is required. He has lived thus, and if I am as good as my father is, I think I ought to be satisfied with my life."

But all the while she knew she was not satisfied. And now, as she pondered the subject, she recalled a period away back in her childhood, when she was for a time a Sunday-school scholar. There came up before her a Sabbath when the faithful teacher had brought home to

the hearts of her pupils the searching question, "What is all this to us?" The sad story of the Cross had been the subject of the lesson, and after trying to impress upon their young minds the necessity of Christ's suffering and death, and the benefit thereby coming to the world, their teacher had put to them, for their consideration, that important practical question, "Have *you*, have *I*, a personal interest in this matter?" And then she had striven to show them how they might be made a sharer in the blessing thus brought to a world lost in sin. In simple language suited to their childish comprehension, she pressed the truth home to their hearts aud consciences. That was years ago, and yet Miss Brown recalled the scene, and remembered how she went home, and knelt down and asked the dear Lord Jesus to make her one of his own little ones. She remembered how she had gone about singing the sweet Sunday-school songs, and how her heart seemed bubbling over with love and joy. Yet the work of that Sabbath had not been followed up; there had never been any personal conversation between teacher and pupil upon the all-important subject, and the impressions of that hour had gradually faded out, only to be recalled in this hour of questioning. She recalled other special occasions, when she had been made uneasy and restless.

Mr. Munson, upon one of the few evenings when she had been present, had preached from the words of Christ, "I am the door; by me, if any man shall enter in, he shall be saved," referring to those who "climb up some other way," and Miss Brown had realized that she belonged to that class of persons, and had been almost persuaded to *enter in through Christ.* But she had made no decision and had gone on, until now the question had again come up in a way that seemed to call for settlement. She must now step over upon the other side, and be numbered with the disciples of Christ, or say, in so many words, that she was unwilling to be known as a Christian. There would be opposition in her family, though this might be slight, for she had always been allowed to do very much as she pleased, but at least there would be no sympathy, no help there, and — Mr. Baxter would sneer — and the truth is that the sneers of Mr. Baxter exerted a powerful influence over Miss Brown's life. Even upon that evening when she had been moved by Mr. Munson's preaching, a sarcastic remark which he made upon the way home had done much to turn the current of her thoughts, and in thinking it over she said to herself: —

"I believe I might have decided then had it not been for him! The question is, Will I let the fear of his ridicule turn me away from what

I know to be my duty!" Then, after careful re-reading of that printed page before her, the irresolute expression of her face changed to one of determination, and at length, through set lips, she said: —

"I'll do it! I do not know how or where I will begin, but from this hour I will enter upon the service of Christ."

The next meeting, being the first of the month, was their first roll-call or consecration meeting (of the two names, experience or consecration meeting, they had chosen the latter). After the names already upon the roll had been called, Dr. Grey said: —

"I trust there are others present, this evening, who would like to have a part in this exercise. Some, perhaps, who have not had an opportunity to add their names to the list of members. Let every one feel at liberty to take part in this meeting."

At this invitation, Miss Brown said, in a clear but quiet voice: —

"'Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.' A week ago to-night, I went out from this chapel feeling that such a call had come to me. I *have chosen*, and henceforth I am a servant of Jesus Christ. I wish to join this society as an Active member. It was this question of Active or Associate membership which brought me to the point of deciding for Christ."

CHAPTER IX.

"Oh, come, let us sing unto the Lord."

"WHAT is all this stuff and nonsense that I hear about your taking part in the meetings down at St. Paul's chapel?"

Mr. Brown asked this question one evening several weeks after that, to one person at least, eventful consecration meeting. His daughter had just come down stairs dressed for the street, and a remark she made to her brother about calling at the chapel for her prompted her father's question. To which she replied calmly: —

"I do not know of any stuff and nonsense connected with our meetings at the chapel."

"*Our* meetings! I did not suppose that it had come to this, that you would identify yourself with the church! What have *you* in common with the people who style themselves Christians?"

"A great deal, I hope."

His daughter's quiet replies angered him, and his voice was pitched a little higher, as he continued: —

"And you do not deny that you take part in the prayer-meetings?"

"I have always taken part in religious services; it is not a new thing for my voice to be heard in public," replied Miss Brown.

"You mean that you have always sung in church; but that is different. I have done that myself."

"But I cannot see why, if I may sing for the Lord, I may not speak for Him, if I choose."

"Nonsense! you do not sing for the Lord; you sing for your salary. When you were younger, you sang for the pleasure and the praise of your friends; and now you sing for money! That is a plain way of putting it, but it is true."

"It *was* true," replied the young lady, "but it is true no longer; while I receive a salary, I have come to regard my voice as God's gift, and now I 'sing unto the Lord,' and all other considerations are secondary."

"Bosh!" and Mr. Brown laughed sneeringly. Then he said, and there was a touch of sadness in his voice:—

"Then it is true that you have broken away from the creed of your parents and thrown aside all the teachings which you have received from your childhood, and become one of the crowd who rest their hopes upon a myth."

"Not quite that, father; it is true that I have found the creed, or rather the *no creed*, in which I have been trained, unsatisfying, and I think I have found something better. Ever since I was old enough to think for myself I have believed the road to eternal life to be by way of the cross, though I have never until now had the moral courage to avow it. Many of your teachings are all right, but, father, they need to be pieced out — no, they need to be spread all over and permeated with the life-giving blood of Christ."

Mr. Brown thought he was angry, but for some reason which he could not have explained, he held back the torrent of words, and only said in reply: —

"Well, Stella, you know very well that I have always allowed you the greatest liberty. Indeed, this is part of my creed, and I shall not oppose you in this; only I wish you had been contented with thinking as you please, without making yourself conspicuous by talking of your views in public."

"I can only repeat what I said at first, I have sung religion all my life, and you never objected. Why should I be more conspicuous in using my voice in speaking and repeating passages of Scripture?"

"It is quite another matter. No one thinks

of the sentiment of the song; you sing for the melody, not for the words. It is not at all the same thing."

"I am aware that many people look at the subject just as you do; but many times when I have been singing in church, I have stopped because I could not sing a lie!"

"Fanaticism!" muttered Mr. Brown. Then speaking more calmly:—

"Really, Stella, I am sorry to have you take up notions about religion. Take the Bible for what it is worth as a moral guide, but do not be too literal in your interpretation. Study it as you would any other book; make use of what accords with your judgment and common-sense, and reject the rest. And don't get erroneous ideas about inspiration. Seriously, Stella, you will make a mistake if you are not careful. You have brilliant prospects opening before you, but I am afraid you will spoil everything."

Miss Brown's face, which had been rather pale during this talk, flushed at this last remark, and her voice trembled slightly as she said:—

"I know what you mean; but I cannot be false to my convictions even in face of disaster to — to *your* hopes in that direction." And with this she turned away and left her father to his reflections.

"Whew!" he said to himself, "that shot hit

the mark! and I imagine the fear of disgusting a certain person will check her enthusiasm a little."

But Mr. Brown did not know his daughter quite as well as he supposed he did.

Never had Miss Brown sung so well as during the last few weeks. Never had she sung with such power. In the choir and in the social meetings the change was very noticeable, and never had she sung so much at home. Sabbath afternoons she gathered the younger members of the family about the organ, and sang for and with them; and when Mr. Baxter came in, as he often did, to run over the hymns for the evening, he found a difference. For instance, one afternoon as they were singing, he came in, and, after practising for the evening, he laid a new piece of music upon the piano-rack, saying,

"Now leave the organ and give us something lively! Here's a new piece which I brought home last night."

"What is it?" she said, turning upon the organ-stool without leaving it.

"Oh, it is the waltz you were speaking of the other evening."

"Ah, thank you! You were kind to bring it; but suppose we leave it until to-morrow evening? Wouldn't you just as soon come in

then and try it?" She had managed to keep her voice steady, though with an effort. Mr. Baxter looked at her with a puzzled expression; what did she mean? She was not apt to be coquettish in her manner of speaking, and she had been wanting that piece of music; and even if she had not wanted it, she was usually very ready to accommodate; he repeated his request. Then she said: —

"Frankly, Mr. Baxter, I do not want to try that waltz to-day."

"Why not?"

"Because it is Sunday, and I think we ought to confine ourselves to sacred music on the Lord's day."

"Well!" This expletive was very expressive; it said volumes. And Miss Brown felt that a link in their friendship had snapped.

"Isn't this a new departure?" he asked.

"Yes, I suppose it is; my attention has lately been turned to this matter, and I have decided to reform my own practice in this respect. We will keep our secular music for the week days, if you please."

"Humph! Why not cut off secular music, as you call it, entirely?"

"Well, I have not come to that point yet. If my voice is to be 'kept for the Master's use,' as Miss Havergal puts it, it may be that I shall

have to cut off *some* things which cannot be used for His glory."

Mr. Baxter was, as a rule, courteous and gentlemanly. He left the piano, and going back to the organ, selected several pieces from the hymn-book, and seemed to forget all about his request and the refusal. When he went away, he left the waltz on the piano, but he did not come on Monday evening to try it!

It soon grew to be the habit of the family to gather about the organ or piano, not only upon Sabbath afternoons, but upon week-days, in the twilight hour after tea, and the voice of praise was heard in that hitherto irreligious family, even the voice of prayer. For Miss Brown was teaching the children to chant the Lord's Prayer. And sometimes the father would add his voice to the choruses. And so the cords which were to draw them into the Society of Christian Endeavor, and finally into the church of Christ, were being wound about the hearts of the children, and the new organization was already reaching out into the homes of its members, and the truths of the gospel were pushing their way into unbelieving hearts. Quietly but surely the cause was advancing.

CHAPTER X.

"These wait all upon Thee."

"WHICH do you consider the most important committee?" Miss Brown asked the question, addressing Dr. Grey. She had taken tea at the parsonage, and was waiting for her escort; Dr. Grey had just come in, a committee meeting having been appointed in the pastor's study; and while they waited, the two chatted upon the subject which already absorbed the thoughts, in a large degree, of many of the young people of St. Paul's. In reply, Dr. Grey said: —

"That is a hard question to answer. I do not see how we could spare any of our committees. True, the prayer-meeting is the central thought of the society, and all the other work circles around it; therefore that committee seems to come first; yet where would the society itself be without the Lookout Committee? Then, to look a little farther; without a Social and Calling Committee the work of the Lookout would be far less effective. It is somewhat like the old fable of the stomach and

the other organs of the human body, given by the old Roman to convince the people of their folly, or like the man and his wife in the story, who were called upon to choose which child they would give away. We should be crippled if we were to set aside any one of our committees."

"And if any fail to do their work well, the whole organization suffers?"

"Yes; I suppose we could exist with fewer committees, but we could not do our whole work, any more than a man with an arm or an eye missing is a whole man. The prayer-meeting is the vital part; take it away, and the society is dead — as a Christian Endeavor Society it has no right to existence."

"I have been learning something this afternoon which I did not know before," said Miss Brown. "Dr. Roberts has been telling me about the society. I suppose you will be astonished, but I did not know that there was a general society. I knew that there were others called by the same name, but I had no idea that we belonged anywhere or to anything but just to ourselves; I was very much surprised."

"Indeed! I wonder if others are in the dark?"

"I suspect they are. Wouldn't it be a good plan to make a statement some evening, giving

a sort of a history of the organization? Of course something was said about it when our society was started, but I fancy that our young people did not take in the thought; and it adds a great deal to the interest when one knows about it."

"Thank you for the suggestion; that is just what we will do at our quarterly meeting, which will occur soon. I hope that whenever you have ideas in this line you will mention them. This is new work for us all, and we need the help of each other."

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Miss Brown's brother, and soon the Prayer-meeting Committee dropped in, one by one. Mrs. Roberts, as chairman, said: —

"I have asked Dr. Grey to be present at this meeting, as I consider that he is really the head of every committee. Our Constitution says that it is his business to see that all the committees perform their work. It would seem to be too great a task to expect him to be present at all the committee meetings, so we will just ask for his approval or criticism upon what we have done, and get his advice upon what we propose to do. We must soon attend to the preparing of new topics. I see that we made a mistake in not having the first list extend over six months instead of three."

"Perhaps it would have been better," said Dr. Grey. "But we expect to make mistakes; and if we make none more serious than this, we shall do well; and I am not sure that we could have done better then. We were not in a position to know just what was needed."

"Our topics should be healthful, and to that end they should be practical; and I have learned from the experience of the last few weeks that we should avoid vague subjects, however pretty and poetical they may sound to us older ones. My contributions to the list were practically failures as topics," said Mrs. Roberts, laughing a little at the recollection of her trials with those impractical topics. "Every time we came to one of them, some girl or boy was sure to say, 'Mrs. Roberts, what does that mean?' And I came to the conclusion that we had shot over the heads of our younger members."

"And for this reason," said Dr. Roberts, "it seems to me that we should not use the same topics for the young people that we use in the church prayer-meeting, though there is much to be said upon the other side of that question. It might be help to have studied the subject in the Christian Endeavor meeting before the Thursday evening meeting. The young people would bring their ideas already brought out in their own meeting into the other, and would

have more courage about taking part. Still, I think it will be difficult to make the list to suit the needs of both young and old."

"I presume that older heads would have managed the topic which we had last week nicely, but 'Holes in the Bag' was altogether too much for some of the children. I thought I would suggest a sermon from the text, for as a prayer-meeting topic it was a failure. Then, we had one other, and they were both of my choosing. 'Levelling Mountains,' that was a cause of stumbling to some besides the children."

"You see we know better how to make the list than we did three months ago," said Dr. Grey. "How will you set about the work of selection?"

"I have asked the members of the committee to bring lists to-night, and I presume they have done so."

Such proved to be the case, and, Mrs. Roberts having collected the slips, the next fifteen minutes was spent in talking over and selecting from the lists: and then the matter was left with one of the committee who had leisure to attend to the arranging and printing of the complete list. Then the subject of leaders came up.

"Rev. Mr. Bailey told me that in their soci-

ety they required all their members to lead in turn. Our Constitution does not make this requirement, and we have thought it not wise to urge unduly. I think some timid ones would hold back from joining for that very reason."

"I had a talk with Mr. Bailey upon this point," said Dr. Roberts, "and I suggested this objection which Mrs. Roberts has advanced, and he said that he thought no Christian would stand aloof on that account; but I do not agree with him. I believe that we have among us some true Christians who would find it impossible to lead a meeting at present, but who will, if we are patient, grow to it. I know that there are some who find it a great trial even to repeat a verse of Scripture."

"I know that is so," said one of the committee. "Mamie Hall sat beside me the other evening, and I heard her repeating a verse softly to herself; but when her name was called she answered 'Present,' and I asked her afterwards how it happened. 'Oh, I was all ready; then, when they called my name, my tongue would not move, and the verse went away from me, though I had whispered it just a minute before.' Now, think of her trying to lead the meeting!"

"But Mamie is growing," said Dr. Roberts, "and she will yet become one of the workers."

"For the present we have decided to ask all in alphabetical order, but to urge no one; thus far, whenever a person has promised to lead, there has been no failure."

"What do you consider the main object of your work as a committee?" asked Dr. Grey. "Or, perhaps I should put it, the ultimate aim."

"Without hesitation I answer, to promote a devotional spirit, and to train up prayer-meeting supporters, not only for the young people's meeting, but for the church prayer-meeting. This must be done as a foundation of all Christian growth and of all Christian activity. We have had activity in our church, but we lacked the spiritual element, and I presume we are not peculiar as a church in this respect."

"Have you any plans for the prayer-meetings, — I mean anything to fall back upon when the meeting drags?"

"Our committee are individually pledged to take part early in the meeting, so as to start off well. Then, we have in reserve several helps which sometimes serve to give a new impulse to the exercise."

"For instance?"

"Perhaps you remember that the other evening our topic was 'Helps and Hindrances,' and, if you noticed, there came a pause longer than

usual, which was broken by Clara Randall saying, 'Now let us each, in just one sentence, tell how we have been helped in our Christian life, or how we have been hindered.' Then she said, 'I have been hindered by letting my fondness for story-books tempt me to neglect the Bible.' Then you remember how quickly others took up the thought, and a dozen or more responded to her suggestion."

"And that was one of your reserves?"

"And that one exercise gave me more knowledge of the needs of my young people than I could have gained in a month of ordinary intercourse," said Dr. Roberts.

CHAPTER XI.

"The entrance of thy words giveth light."

"I HAVE been over to The Mills this afternoon, making a few calls and looking about," said Doctor Roberts, meeting Fred Castleton at the street corner one evening early in May. "It is a place for work. I have been wondering if your Sunday-school or Missionary Committee could not do something over there."

"In what way?" asked Fred.

"In every way! There is a need in all the lines of Christian work. They have no Sabbath, Bibles are almost unknown, there are two or three families who attend church here, one only who belongs to our congregation, but for the most part they are an ungodly people. Many of them are very poor. I have been thinking a great deal about that neighborhood of late."

"How is it that so near us is a field so neglected, when there are five churches right here? Has there never been any attempt to give them the gospel?"

"Yes; several trials have been made. The

Brick-Church people started a preaching service out there two or three years ago, and I have rather considered it within their parish; but the service was discontinued over a year since, and there is, as I have said, not the slightest hint of anything like a religious service."

"What do you suggest as a beginning?"

"Oh, I do not suggest! I only point out the field and its desolation. As to the methods of work, you will be more likely to succeed if you follow out your own promptings."

"Would a Sunday-school be of any benefit?" asked Fred.

"Well, it might be a good thing, and it might not succeed," and with this non-committal reply Doctor Roberts walked on, leaving Fred Castleton a somewhat astonished young man. Evidently, the pastor of St. Paul's had intended to lay this responsibility upon his young people, and the Fred Castleton of that period was not one to throw it off. Doctor Roberts knew that, and as he walked down the street he said to himself, "There'll be something done at The Mills!"

"We must go over and start a Sunday-school at once!" said Dr. Grey, when Fred laid the matter before him. "The only question is, Who will go? I *cannot;* my day is full; I can scarcely get around to the evening service, and

frequently I do not. And *you* must keep up the boys' four-o'clock meeting."

"I know where there is a man for the place if only he would step into it."

"Who is he?"

"Burrill."

"But he has persistently stood aloof from our society; I do not believe he can be persuaded to join us."

"No matter; we can work through him if he does not belong to us. Upon the whole, I am glad to go outside. We want to reach out in every direction. We want our influence to extend beyond the membership. We believe Burrill to be an earnest Christian; he does not stand aloof from want of interest in religious matters, but he has somehow taken a prejudice against all sorts of organizations."

"Well, shall we lay this before our Sunday-school Committee and suggest to them this idea of trying to get Mr. Burrill to take hold of the work?"

"I think that is the best way to move in the matter, and it is evident that we must move!" replied Fred.

Mr. Burrill, upon being consulted, said:—

"If a school can be gathered and a room secured, I will go over and run it for six months, unless it runs out before that time expires."

Now, some of my readers who have gone out into a desolate country neighborhood, and, finding it easy to obtain the use of the schoolhouse, have set about the establishing of a Sunday-school, to find the children eager to attend, glad to have a place to go upon what had hitherto been the longest and dullest day of the week; such of you as have tried the experiment can have no idea of the task which that Sunday-school Committee had undertaken; the children at The Mills did not care about a place to go to on Sundays. There were a dozen resorts far more delightful to them than anything which the little stuffy room that the committee had with difficulty secured could offer. There was the ball game in the open field, free to every boy at The Mills; there was the walk up the ravine to the falls, which was especially attractive to the older girls and boys. And just a mile away, a little lake, scarcely more than a pond, spread itself out clear and sparkling, tempting them to a boat-ride. And upon the picnic grounds in the glen there were often music and dancing accompanying excursionists from the nearest city. Ah, there was no lack of places of entertainment for the boys and girls, and for the older ones too, at The Mills! The saloons kept wide-open doors, and never lacked for a crowd. There were quieter

ways of spending the holy time. A few stayed in their own homes, making a family holiday of the Sabbath; others chatted with their neighbors on doorsteps and at street corners; but there were not many who took any interest in the new movement. Yet about twenty-five boys and girls and a few women came to the first session of the school, and Mr. Burrill was not a man to look back, having put his hand to the work. I cannot tell you the story of that enterprise. It would take a volume. I only refer to it to show you how the society was reaching out; later I may give you a hint of transformations wrought out through the agency thus established.

When Mr. Burrill consented to take charge of the school, he began to look about him for helpers. There were but two members of the committee who were available as workers in the school, and neither of these was able to lead the singing. Dr. Grey, being consulted, suggested Flossie Miller; he had already fallen in with Fred's idea of drawing outsiders into the work, and Miss Flossie was quite willing to help. Indeed, the enterprise promised her considerable amusement, and every Sabbath afternoon, through all the summer heat, four young people faithfully labored to bring a knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ to a people

ignorant as those in what we term heathen lands. Flossie herself, though she would not accept Christ, was anxious that these people should have what she rejected. She said: —

"If ever anybody needed religion, it is that Banks family!"

"Do they need it more than Flossie Miller?" asked Mr. Burrill.

"Oh, well, they haven't any inherited Christianity to fall back upon!" she answered, lightly; "you see, I have all the blessings that come from Christian parents, but those poor creatures did not have anything of the sort left to them; I suspect that they are bankrupt from away back!"

"But, Flossie," said Mr. Burrill, earnestly, "you do not expect to be saved on account of your father's Christianity?"

"Well, maybe not exactly; but I do not rank myself in the same list with Minnie Banks!"

"Perhaps God does not; you know Christ said, 'To whom much is given, of him much will be required.'"

In that little sentence Flossie Miller had her word for that day! She had been to the morning service, to the home Sunday-school, and over to The Mills school, and now as she rode home with Mr. Burrill the first words of divine truth which she had heard were those words of

Christ repeated by her companion; she had been as one of those who having ears hear not; but that sentence pierced the dulness of her hearing; and never again could she fall back upon her *inherited religion* as an excuse for her own indifference; never again could she be altogether indifferent. She would have nothing to do with the Society of Christian Endeavor, and yet it had reached all the way around by The Mills and through Mr. Burrill, and closed about her heart in that one comprehensive thought borrowed from the Saviour whom she had rejected!

SAN FRANCISCO
Alcove
Shelf

CHAPTER XII.

"Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him."

ST. PAUL'S had been confronted by other problems than this one, of how to win and hold the younger element of society. There was the old and ever recurring question, that comes not only to churches but to organizations and individuals all the world over. It is the question to the solving of which we devote a large portion of our time and energies; in the wise economy of Providence, the work of providing for our needs demands attention during a large part of our waking hours, and the question of how to raise money is a legitimate one and often a puzzling one as well.

It comes to churches with force, at stated periods, when the financial committee rack their brains, and bring to the front all their mathematical genius in order to make five dollars count six. But too often, in spite of all their efforts, there is at the close of the fiscal year a deficiency. Some congregations are accustomed to make this up promptly, though it

comes hard, and are ready to start out upon a New Year free from debt. Others let it run over until the deficit assumes such formidable proportions that the board become alarmed, and then subscriptions and festivals and fairs are the order until the cloud is once more lifted. Of all the unhappy circumstances upon the face of the earth, a church debt must be counted as among the most trying. St. Paul's was one of the congregations which are always coming out just a little behind in money matters, if not enough to trouble them with visions of bankruptcy, yet so as to embarrass the board considerably, and as yet no way of solving this financial problem had been discovered. At least, all the methods which had been tried had failed of giving a satisfactory solution. There were a few, the pastor among them, who had long advocated a method which had been tried in other places with success. But this measure had been opposed by the board, with Colonel Hicks at the head. There were always unexpected expenses; last year it was a new furnace; the year before it was that flagging which the village trustees ordered put down upon the new street back of the church; and next year the church ought to have some repairs made upon it; and the question of where the money was to come from was a serious one. Formerly, enter-

tainments had helped them out; but, some way, since the Society of Christian Endeavor was started, entertainments for the purpose of raising money had not been very popular; and Colonel Hicks was not sure that the young people would take hold if a fair or festival was undertaken. It was only a few months after the life of the society began that the church treasurer, who was Colonel Hicks himself, said to Dr. Grey: —

"I am sure I do not know how we are coming out; I shall have to borrow money for this quarter, and when we begin to run behind it is hard work to get caught up."

"What do you lack this quarter?" asked Dr. Grey.

"Oh, it is not a great deal — only fifty dollars; but you see it is the idea of lacking *anything* which troubles me. It is not the way to do business; we ought to have a full treasury instead of one always depleted."

"What is the trouble with our church, financially?" asked the doctor. "Are we paying more than we can afford?"

"Well, no; not if all did their part. But the truth is, a few are doing more than their share, and many are giving nothing. A number of young people have come into the congregation lately who have no idea of their duty in this

respect. I do not suppose they ever stop to think how these privileges which they enjoy are paid for."

"I believe that to be true," replied Dr. Grey, "though I confess I have never thought of it."

"Of course," said Colonel Hicks, "we are only too glad to have these people among us, and I only mention it to explain why, with a steadily increasing congregation, we are at the same time running behind as usual in our money matters. Last year, at this time, we were only thirty-two dollars behind, and I think quite as a large a proportion of the pew rents have been paid in this year. I know that the few who are always ready will make up the deficit at the end of the year, but I do not like to be always bringing in a statement of arrearages; still there seems no remedy for it."

"Do you not think that if we were to try the 'envelope system,' as it is called, or some other plan of systematic contributions, we should do better?"

"No! I do not believe in that at all; we should be bankrupt in six months! Dr. Roberts has been harping upon that for years, but I am positive that we could never make it a success here. People who have a fixed and regular income might be willing to adopt the plan,

but, as a rule, people prefer to pay when they happen to have money on hand."

"But what people *prefer to do*, and what *is right to do*, are not always synonymous terms," said Dr. Grey.

"But people *cannot* do it!"

"I do not see why."

"How can a person who sometimes does not receive a dollar for weeks, a farmer for instance, who is obliged to wait for the potato-digging, the apple-harvesting, or the returns for cheese and butter, etc., — how is such a man going to pay a certain sum each week?"

"I am sure there are ways of getting at it, if one had the will to do it," replied Dr. Grey. "I have not studied the subject, but what is easier than for a man to lay aside a certain proportion of each instalment received for produce, and draw from that according to his pledge?"

"Oh, you can plan for other people, but you cannot make this work! There is no use in talking."

Dr. Grey went home to think, and the more he thought, the more he saw in clear light two things: one was that there was truth in Colonel Hicks' remark in regard to a large number of young people who were regular attendants upon church services, and were at the same time giving next to nothing for the support of the

gospel; the other truth, and the more important one, was this thought of systematic giving. Why was not the Christian Endeavor Society the place to give the plan a trial, thereby covering the other question, and at the same time giving to the young people some training along the line of Christian giving?

By this time Dr. Grey had become familiar with the history of the Christain Endeavor movement, and had also become acquainted with the workings of the society in other localities. In conversation with the president of a neighboring society, he had asked the question, "How do you raise money?" and had been told that they made no effort in that line, and that the small amounts needed for such expenses as printing had been contributed by a few leading members. Another society raised money only by collections at socials. Another, having pledged a small sum to the general society, was obliged to resort to an entertainment to raise the money to fulfil the obligation. Dr. Grey was coming to the conclusion that training in the duty of giving was as important as training in the line of prayer-meeting work; and he set himself to think out a plan by which this training should be accomplished, and, at the same time, aid should be given to the struggling Financial Committee of the church.

In the beginning of his reflections upon the subject, it seemed that it would be necessary to have a committee for this special work, and, although there could be no serious objections to an additional committee, yet he did not wish to multiply them unnecessarily; and as his ideas took shape and matured, he concluded that the matter could be arranged and carried out by the forces already at work. His scheme, laid before the society and adopted, was something like this: —

Each member was furnished with fifty-two small manila envelopes, such as can be purchased for seventy-five cents per thousand, or they can be made still cheaper by the nimble fingers of the younger girls and boys. Each member also received a printed pledge, running like this: —

"In the belief that giving is an act of worship, and that proportionate and systematic giving is the method sanctioned by the Scriptures, I promise to pay into the treasury of the Society of Christian Endeavor weekly, the sum of ——. The understanding is that one-half of the amount raised by the society shall be paid over to the church treasurer, to be used for defraying the current expenses of St. Paul's Church. The remaining half shall be used as the society by a two-thirds vote shall direct, with this restriction: it shall be used in the channels of the society's legitimate work.

"(Signed) —— ——"

The pledges, having been filled out and signed, were recorded by the treasurer and each mem-

ber given a number corresponding to that upon his envelope. After this preliminary work was accomplished, all was easy and plain sailing. The weekly offerings were brought in sealed; only the treasurer knew the amount of each person's pledge. He opened the envelopes, counted the money, and marked *paid* by a symbol. I may say that the pledges ranged from one cent per week to twenty-five cents per week. The envelopes were gathered at each weekly meeting by two boys, while all sang a hymn of consecration.

CHAPTER XIII.

"A tribute of a free-will offering of thine hand which thou shalt give unto the Lord thy God, according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee."

LET me pass over a period of six months. Another of those stated times so trying to Colonel Hicks and his associates had come around. As usual, the colonel was in a ferment. Expense must be met, and the treasury was by no means in an encouraging condition. While the perplexed financier was counting the pile of money and adding columns of figures from top to bottom, and from bottom to top, in the vain effort to discover a flaw in his reckoning, which being rectified would set things in better shape, the door-bell rang. For some cause the sound was rasping to the treasurer's already excited nerves, and, as he heard himself inquired for, he half arose as if to shut and lock the office door, but seemed to think better of it and settled back in his chair with a resigned air; but he frowned slightly when he saw that his visitor was only a boy. He was in a hurry to get through with his disagreeable task of accounting when things would not account, and he did not like to be disturbed by

a boy. However, he turned away from his desk and managed to be quite courteous.

"I will not detain you long," said the boy, speaking quickly, as though he divined his host's annoyance at being disturbed. "I have called to hand you this; it is the quarterly contribution to the church fund from the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor." The "boy" may be pardoned for putting in the whole name, with a slight emphasis upon the *first two words*. He knew that Colonel Hicks did not believe in boys.

"There is fifty dollars, as you will find if you count it. If you will give me a receipt I will not trouble you farther."

"Why! what! I do not understand!" said the colonel, for once in his life puzzled and embarrassed.

"It is not difficult to understand, is it, that the Society of Christian Endeavor have voted to give fifty dollars towards defraying the expenses of the church?" asked the visitor, smiling.

"But, where did you get it? I did not know that you had been having an entertainment!"

"Neither have we! The money was raised by our plan of systematic giving."

"Your plan of *systematic giving!* What is *that?*"

I do not think that Colonel Hicks meant to be sarcastic or scornful in his tone; but if there was anything which would stir him up, it was this phrase, "systematic giving." However, the young man, for really I think he grew from a boy into a young man during that interview, seemed not to notice the older man's scorn, but proceeded to explain that the society had adopted the envelope system, and this was their first quarter's collection. "Perhaps we shall give more next time," he said; "some of our members did not fall in with the plan at first, though now nearly all have taken their pledges; but we thought that this amount, small as it is, might help along a little."

Colonel Hicks wrote out the receipt, and his visitor departed. "The envelope system!" He repeated the phrase, as he was left alone; of course there was nothing in it; he had always considered it a visionary scheme, altogether impracticable. He held that if St. Paul's was to adopt it, they would be throwing overboard the uncertain results of their present system of renting pews, for the certainty of raising less than half what they needed; but with fifty dollars from the boys and girls, as the outcome of the condemned plan, lying upon the table before him, he was forced to modify his expression if not his views. He added no more

columns that morning from top to bottom, nor in reverse order; he stuffed the money into his pocket-book, and, picking up his hat and gloves — Colonel Hicks never appeared in public without gloves, under any circumstances — went down street, stopping on the way to say to Mr. Collins that he should not need his signature upon that note, as there would be no borrowing money this time.

The next week Colonel Hicks took advantage of his privilege as an honorary member, by virtue of being an officer in the church, and attended the Young People's Meeting. Towards the end of the hour he said: —

"I did not come in to-night to embarrass the young people, nor to take up their time. I want to express my pleasure at the manner in which the meeting has been carried on, especially the promptness with which so many have taken part, has been a source of great gratification; and I am glad to see so many here. I had no idea that your meetings were so well attended; I congratulate you. But I have a message for you. I am the bearer of the thanks of the financial board, to the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, for their very timely offering. It is a very pleasing thought that the younger element in the society is taking up responsibilities, and bearing them so

well; we look to you to take up the work which we must soon lay down, and, judging from the experience of this week, and from what I have heard here to-night, I believe that you will not fail when that time comes. It has been somewhat of a question in my mind, how we were to continue to support the gospel here; but I thank God that the question is in a way to be answered. I want to take back some unsympathetic things I have said, and all the coldness I have felt, in regard to this organization. I bid you Godspeed."

Colonel Hicks' manner was as pompous as ever; he could not lay that manner aside and still be Colonel Hicks. But his words were simple and direct, and those who heard him believed in him, and thereafter counted him as a sure ally. He might not yet believe in "the envelope system" for the church as a whole, but for the young people he *knew* it to be the right thing.

Those innocent little envelopes had not won their way even thus far into favor without a struggle. When Mr. Collins' twelve-year-old boy carried home his package and pledge, and tried to explain the matter to his parents, the father said, "It is one of Dr. Grey's notions; he is full of them. I look upon it as a great piece of nonsense. All the money you'll get in

that way won't pay the minister for one sermon!"

"Maybe it will help along with a text!" said the boy.

"I wouldn't have anything to do with it!" persisted Mr. Collins.

"Oh, now," said the mother, seeing the boy's look of distress, "if it pleases the children to go into it, why not let Charlie have a share in it?"

"Oh, well, I don't believe in putting money into the hands of the youngsters! What do a lot of boys and girls know about appropriating money? They'll go and vote it all for a Christmas tree, or a picnic, and we haven't any money to waste! I tell you we older ones better keep the money matters in our own hands!"

"But, as you say they do not raise much, there will not be much to waste," suggested Mrs. Collins.

The good man saw that his remarks had been slightly contradictory, but he only persisted in saying that it was not right to encourage the folly.

"Never mind, Charlie; you can manage to earn some money for your offering. I'll see about it. Your father will not object to your giving what you earn."

"Do as you're a mind to! Do as you're a

mind to! But it is all nonsense!" Thus Mr. Collins dismissed the subject.

Another gentleman who spent money with a lavishness that was unusual in a small town, and who never seemed to take any account of the pennies, and who certainly did not set apart any specified sum for benevolence, said, "I do not see any use in this thing. Of course, Frank will give something, but nothing will be gained; whatever goes in that way, will be taken out of some other contribution."

"No, sir!" said Frank, who had already entered into the spirit of the scheme, "I am not going to give my father's money! I expect to earn my own tithe money, or save it out of my allowance!"

"But it will all come out of my pocket-book, will it not, whether it is taken from your allowance, or whether you earn it?"

"Not if grandpa hires me!" said the independent little fellow.

These people did not yet understand that it was more than the gathering-up of a few dollars, which otherwise might not find their way into the Lord's treasury, that Dr. Grey had in view; they did not realize that Christian givers for the future were thus in training.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?"

THE town, in which this church to which I have introduced you is established, is put down in the gazetteers as a town of twelve hundred inhabitants, having five churches, a high school, two hotels, manufacturing enterprises, etc. This is a description of the typical town in the Eastern and Middle States. No mention is made of the numerous saloons and gambling facilities, but our imagination can easily supply the omission. And we wonder sometimes how it is that Satan should get such a foothold in our beautiful towns, where God has planted his churches, armed for the conflict!

In this chapter I want to tell you how the enemy stole into one Christian home, making the attack at an unfortified point, and bearing off as a victim the only son.

Let me take you backward in time five years to a cold, dreary November morning. I think I have not mentioned that Deacon Miller lived a mile from the village; that is, a mile from the centre of the town. He came in from the barn

upon this particular morning, shivering, and stood for a few moments rubbing his hands before the kitchen stove. Presently, with a shrug of his shoulders, as if he felt the keen blast which shook the windows, he said, "I think I'll send Frank down to the shop. The Gray has lost one shoe, and the rest are loose. *I* don't want to hang around half a day waiting for the horse to be shod."

"But what will Frank do while the shoeing is going on?" asked his wife.

"Oh, *he* can go in somewhere, and wait! He can stay in the shop, for that matter. A *boy* don't mind hanging about."

Mrs. Miller was not given to argument; but there came a day when, looking back, and remembering that morning's conversation, she wondered that she had not lifted up her voice in a protest loud enough to have saved her boy.

Frank was sent to the blacksmith shop, with instructions to wait until the Gray was "shod all around." He hung about the shop a while; then, becoming tired of that, he sauntered out; but, finding it rather cold for a saunter, he dropped into a grocery store, where men and boys were accustomed to sit out their leisure hours. It was anything but a desirable place for a pure-minded boy, — a place where coarse jests went around, and rude and even profane

conversation was not prohibited. Not a place in which Frank Miller would have chosen to spend the morning. Yet what was the boy to do? During the summer he had sometimes been sent upon similar errands; but while the weather was warm, there was always an out-door game to watch or join in, upon the green or in the park; but upon this raw November day, the air of the grocery, foul with the fumes of tobacco and — whisper it low, for it was a grocery, not a saloon — whiskey, was preferable to the chilliness outside. I know there *are* boys who would have walked the streets all that damp, murky morning through, whistling merrily to keep up their spirits, and stepping briskly to keep up the circulation, rather than have placed a foot inside that store. There *are* boys who would have shunned the foul air and the fouler moral atmosphere of the place as they would shun a fever-infected district. I know and honor some such boys, but Frank Miller was not made of such stuff. Yet he was not a bad boy. He knew the right, and he meant to keep to it; but he was weak without knowing it. He liked lively company, liked a good story. The funny column of the newspaper always attracted him. His scrap-book was made up of extracts from the *Danbury Man* and the *Fat Contributor;* his declamation-day selections were

sure to be from Artemus Ward or Mark Twain. Yet, with all this predilection for fun in his nature, had there been any other place in which to wait, he would not have spent that morning in Markson's store. But there was no other place, and so he went there.

That was the beginning. A small beginning? Yes; but you and I know that from the veriest trifles some of the mighty things of earth have grown. The next time he had to wait, he went to Markson's, quite as a matter of course. There he met a boy about his own age, who proposed a game of checkers, innocent enough, but, played in the back room of Markson's, not quite *safe*. From the simple game of skill to the game of chance was an easy step; and soon, sooner than any one would have believed it possible, the innocent boy became accustomed to dice and cards. Meantime, in some mysterious way, glasses appeared, and bottles. How was it? I cannot explain how it was that Markson evaded the law; but it is another of the things which you and I know, that there are such evasions, and that minors have no difficulty in getting liquor; that our boys, our noble boys, are being ensnared by the wily enemy of souls.

And I wish I could get the ear of the W. C. T. U.'s and Y. P. S. C. E.'s and of churches and Christians everywhere to urge upon them

the importance of giving the Frank Millers all over the land a place to spend the hours while the blacksmith "shoes the Gray all around." Let us provide *waiting-places* for our boys, and keep them out of the saloons and groceries.

There came a time when Deacon Miller bitterly recalled his indifference in regard to an effort of the W. C. T. U. to establish a reading-room. He had not been at all opposed, and it was only at a later period that he came to realize that indifference is sometimes quite as powerful as opposition. And it was mainly because of this want of interest upon the part of Christian men that the scheme fell through, and there was no place of safety for the boys. Well, so quickly was the work done that it was only a year later that the seventeen-year-old boy went out from his home to become a tramp. Not that he ever dreamed of such a fate. There had been a stormy scene in the little kitchen. A pack of cards had been discovered in the boy's room, the odor of tobacco and liquor had been ill concealed; and the outraged father had lost his patience, and in his sudden anger had spoken words which had driven the boy from home. You know the story. How the boy thought he could easily take care of himself, that he could even make for himself a fortune; and he pictured his return, after a few years, loaded with

honors and riches! You know, too, how disappointment had awaited him at every turn. It had not been easy always to earn enough to keep off the pangs of hunger; it had not been easier to resist temptation while wandering hither and thither over the world than it had been at home, and steadily the boy had gone downward until to human view it seemed as though he were utterly lost and ruined. Yet here in this young man's extremity was God's opportunity to show his wonderful love and his marvellous power to save.

Four years had gone by since he began this wandering life. And one dark, rainy evening, late in the autumn, he found himself a stranger, penniless, wet, and hungry, in the streets of a Western city. He had spent his last dollar for a railroad ticket, having been led to the place by the hope of finding a job upon some public works; and, disappointed in this, he was almost in despair. It seemed to him that he had never been in so sore a plight. Where to go, where to find shelter and food, were the questions which troubled him, as he wandered aimlessly through the streets. It was not often that he allowed himself to think of the past; but, to-night, thoughts of home, of father and mother and the little sister, crowded upon him. He was perfectly sober, but was not likely to

remain so long; for, though he had no money nor any acquaintances to "treat" him, he had about made up his mind that he would look out for a pawnbroker's, and try to raise some money upon his coat. "A fellow might better be without a coat than to starve with one," he muttered, as he quickened his steps. But presently a glittering transparency, swinging out ahead, caught his eye.

"I s'pose a fellow might step in, and get warmed up," he said to himself, never doubting that it was just such a place as he had been accustomed to frequent. But, as he came nearer, he saw his mistake. The transparency was a lamp swinging from the doorway of what seemed to be the side entrance to a church. There were some letters which he tried to make out, as he came closer, "Y. P. S. — S. No — C. E. — Y. P. S. C. E. What in the world? I have heard of Y. M. C. A. But this looks like a church; but those letters don't stand for anything I ever heard of; but it says 'Welcome,' in big, blazing letters. What did they go and put up that thing for, if they didn't mean it, and if they didn't want folks to go in? I'll just take a look in, and see what it is. I reckon they will have a fire; and I declare," sniffing the air, as he said this last, "I believe I smell coffee!" Just then the door opened; and before he had

time to protest, had he been so inclined, Frank Miller, unkempt and travel-stained, showing upon his still handsome face marks of dissipation, stood in a well lighted room. And around him had been thrown the first thread of a web of influence to be woven about him by the Y. P. S. C. E.

CHAPTER XV.

"His servants shall serve Him."

HOW was it done? How did they contrive to throw about the wretched outcast who had stumbled into their midst influences which had power to hold him back from utter ruin?

What was the place into which he had come by what seemed a chance? Was it a reading-room, church-parlor, prayer-room, lunch-room? Well, it was none of these, yet it was all combined: they called it "The Rooms." And, weeks after, Frank Miller wrote to his father a letter which had for the key-note, "Father, I have sinned," and in it he said: —

"Those letters that puzzled me so at first, I know now what they mean. To me they mean salvation. That evening, when, weary and faint and bewildered, I suddenly found myself among people who acted as though they expected me, and were glad to see me, was the turning-point in my career. Heart-sick and despairing as I was, even then it struck me that they had a way of doing things which was peculiar; and now, after weeks of experience

and observation, I am of the opinion that if more people had the courage to do peculiar things, it would be better for poor wrecks of humanity like myself."

I can only give you an outline of what was done for the saving of that soul, thrown suddenly upon their sympathy and love. The young man who had first greeted the wanderer, noting his surprise and embarrassment at the unexpected surroundings, said cordially: —

"Will you step this way?" And as they walked away together, he continued, "I think you are a stranger here?" and while the visitor mumbled an affirmative, his host went on: "I observed that you seemed to have been travelling, and thought you would like to refresh yourself; you will find water and towels here, and brushes also. There is the shoe-brush. Excuse me a moment." Presently he returned. "Ah! you are nearly ready to be introduced? I see you have no baggage; perhaps you would like a clean collar? Paper collars are not quite the thing, but they answer very well in an emergency. What is your size? Ah, here it is! Now, shall we have a cup of coffee? This way!" And in a moment the famished young man was seated at a little table, with a plate of sandwiches and a cup of delicious coffee before him. Afterwards he said, "It just seemed as

though my mother must have made that coffee; and, if you'll believe it, the fellow soon had the whole miserable story out of me."

It was surprising how communicative Frank grew over that cup of coffee, and it was not many minutes before the friend he had so unexpectedly found knew all about him, and had determined to make an effort to save him.

"Now if, as you say, you are tired of this way of living, why not try a better way?"

"It is one thing to be tired of it, and quite another matter to make a change," said Frank, gloomily.

"I don't think you would find it so very difficult."

"Much you know about it! When a fellow gets as far along as I have got, it's no use to try to get back. You have been kind, and done me a good turn, but you might just as well have kicked me out into the street. I'm pretty much done for, I guess."

"How old are you?" asked his friend.

"Nearly twenty-two," replied Frank.

"*Done for* at twenty-two! Why, my friend, there's a fair prospect of a good many years of life for you yet. Because you have thrown away four or five years, why should you go on flinging your life away? Why not turn about and travel the other way?"

"Because I *can't!* And it would not do any good if I undertook the job of reforming myself. Reformed men never stay reformed. I have heard my father say that he never knew one to hold out."

"I think that is a mistake. It is true they often fall back, but not always; and at your age there is everything to hope. If you will make up your mind to serve a new master —"

"Hold on!" interrupted Frank. "I expected you would begin to talk religion! I want none of that!"

"Is not your mother a Christian?" asked his companion. At this the young outcast bowed his head, and the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"For your mother's sake!" pleaded his friend.

He shook his head. "It is no use! I've gone too far!"

"Too far for what?"

"Too far to repent — too far to be different."

"Do you want to be different?"

"Want to be! Why, there are times when, if I could be set back five years, I'd go back through fire if by that means I could burn out memories that pierce my soul through and through!"

"But there is a way to blot out the record of the past."

"*Not for me!* There can be no blotting out of such a life as mine has been."

"See here, my friend, do you believe the Bible?"

"Oh, yes, I believe it; but there's nothing in the Bible for me. That is a book for Christians."

"Now, wait; do you remember that it says, 'Though your sins be as scarlet'?"

"Yes; but that is not for me. Mine are *black!*"

And all the way through that conversation Frank continually repeated his conviction, "It's no use!"

At length his friend said, suddenly, "Where are you going to stay to-night?"

"I don't know; I suppose I'll go out from here, and perhaps go to some saloon; and if they kick me out, most likely I'll bring up at the station-house."

"I'll tell you where you are going to stay, — you are going home with me."

"With you?"

"Yes, with me."

"Not much!"

But he did; his objections were overruled; in fact, there was stealing over him the feeling of weakness which is the precursor of illness, and he wanted to get somewhere, just to lie

down. We must pass briefly over the next three weeks. In a cheery room in one of the brightest and handsomest homes in the city the battle was fought out. For days fever and delirium held sway over the mind and body of him who had almost been Satan's victim beyond recall; but in that room, consecrated by the young couple, to whom God had given much of this world's riches, to the use of just such sinking souls, the victory was won. And Frank Miller came back to health, and came back in newness of life. As in the long ago they brought one sick of the palsy unto Jesus, so these loving and faithful young disciples bore this weak and helpless soul unto the Great Physician, and besought Him that He would exercise His healing power. Borne upon the prayers of these to the very gate of the kingdom, how could he help entering in?

One day he said to his host, "Now, tell me about this. I do not understand how you came to take me in, and what was the place where I saw you first."

"That," replied his host, "was the rooms of our Young People's Society. The place is a sort of a puzzle to a good many people. It does not exactly belong to the church; it used to be a dwelling-house. We have leased it as an experiment, and have fitted up rooms for

various purposes. We have a reading-room and a gymnasium, besides committee-rooms and rooms for the meetings of the various benevolent societies of our church. The Woman's Missionary Society had just had their tea there upon the evening when you came in, and that is how we happened to have refreshments on hand; but we are talking of having a place opened where a young fellow in the strait you were in can get a luncheon. And about *this* house. You see I wanted to preach the gospel, but the way was not clear. I could not leave my father, and there were other hindrances; but I concluded that there were other ways of doing the Lord's work; and when my father left me a fortune, and this house came to me, my wife and I set apart this wing as especially consecrated to the service of the Master. You have been His guest. These are His rooms, and I am only doing His bidding."

CHAPTER XVI.

"Hear ye and give ear . . . for the Lord hath spoken."

THE Christian Endeavor Society was not held in favor by Mrs. Grenville. Its aims were quite too high to be thoroughly appreciated by her. Mrs. Grenville believed in no dividing line between the church and the world; at least she was certain that the distinction need not be very marked; a name upon the church roll, an occasional observance of the sacred ordinances, with due regard to the moralities, was to her view all that was called for in the way of a dividing line between the life of a Christian and that of a worldling. And her life was in accordance with her views. God had given to Mrs. Grenville great wealth, and she had been almost swept away from her spiritual moorings by the tide of worldliness which had come into her life. With worldly prosperity she had not received, because she had not sought it, a corresponding supply of grace. The wealth which the Lord had given, she had not thought of consecrating to His service. Not that she did not give liberally; she was

often lavishly generous in her gifts; but her giving was to please herself; she knew nothing of the delightful privilege of giving the Lord's money. A consecrated purse was a thing quite unknown to her thoughts. She went to the weekly prayer-meeting when she was not too weary from her round of calls and entertainments, or when other engagements did not interfere. To her mind, attendance upon the week-day evening service was simply a matter of choice; there was no idea of duty connected with the prayer-meeting, and if she chose to attend a party or to give one upon that evening, it was perfectly proper to do so. With such views and a practice to correspond, she could not be expected to enter into the spirit of a society which had for its central thought the prayer-meeting idea, and which had as its bond of union a pledge to attend and take part in such a meeting regularly.

Things were not going quite to Mrs. Grenville's mind; it was not to her satisfaction to find that the young people were all too much absorbed in the Christian Endeavor work to enter into her plans for a series of entertainments. The Social Committee did not fall in with her elaborate schemes. At the second election of officers, Clara Randall was made the chairman of the Social Committee, and to her

Mrs. Grenville suggested a church fair, to continue for a week, with varied entertainments for each evening.

"We might repeat the operetta we gave last year," she said, "and I think we have talent enough to get up a play for one evening."

Clara said, "I am sorry, Mrs. Grenville, to disappoint you, but our committee have decided not to give any entertainments which call for money beyond a voluntary offering, and not to give any of the sort which — which" — here Clara hesitated. She did not wish to hurt Mrs. Grenville's feelings, and yet she must define her position, or rather the position of the committee. She continued: "You know that there are those in our church who do not approve of a certain style of entertainments, and we feel that as our society has the recognition and support of the church, we ought to be careful in this respect."

"But, my child, the Amateur Club had the support of the church officials, and well we might have their recognition, for we brought handsome sums into the treasury. There may be a few old fogies who are opposed, but they are not worth minding. Your society will lose ground if you take such a position."

"Think so? It will take considerable of a

set-back to discourage us. We have been so wonderfully prospered," said Clara.

"Besides," she continued, "the truth is we have not time for a fair; we have so much society work to do that the Social Committee find their labors somewhat lightened. The Missionary Committee have just planned a series of missionary-meetings, and the Temperance Committee are going to follow with a series. Then, later, the Prayer-meeting Committee propose to have a concert of prayer, to last at least a week; so I do not see how we can put in a church fair."

"Well," said Mrs. Grenville, "I am sure I am not anxious to spend *my* strength over the affair, but, as we always come out behind in our finances, I thought we would have a good time, make some money, and keep a hold upon some of the people who have to be held in this way."

"I do not think we are going to run behind in the finances this year," replied Clara. "The society are doing so well with the envelope collection that Colonel Hicks says everything is coming out all right. And we seem to be holding our members pretty well as it is."

"Oh, you hold your members, but now there's Mr. Baxter; we worked so hard to get hold of him that it would be a great pity to let him slip away now."

"Well, it seems to me that if it is going to take a week of church fairs to hold Mr. Baxter, it would be as well to let him go. But, for my part, I would rather try a week of prayer."

"Clara Randall! You are all developing into first class fanatics. There's my Walter! You have just about spoiled him!"

"What do you mean, Mrs. Grenville? I thought Walter was a wonderfully good boy!"

"Oh, he is *good!* He is so good that I can't take any comfort with him!"

"That is a rather singular complaint for a mother to make," said Clara. "I know several mothers who would be only too happy if they could say that without the qualifying adverb. Mrs. Grenville, are you not glad that Walter wants to study for the ministry?"

"Indeed, I am not glad. I do not want Walter to be a minister. Now, I suppose you think that is dreadful! But, Clara, think of it; Walter, as a rich man, could occupy almost any position he chose to strive for. The idea of his wanting to be a minister, settling down in some obscure place the victim of the whims of everybody. And that is just what he will do if I do not succeed in persuading him to give up the notion. He will go off into some forsaken place as a missionary; I am sure of it. Why, Clara, there are *poor* boys enough to study for

the ministry, though for that matter Walter will be poor enough if he persists in carrying out his plan."

"But, Mrs. Grenville, what if God wants him for this work?"

"Why, of course, if I believed that, I would not object; but I think, indeed I am certain, that the notion was born of a fanaticism that you have set going in your society. That prayer-meeting pledge is a mischief-worker. Of course any boy can learn to talk in meeting, and because Walter has developed a talent, as you and the rest think, in your meetings, it is no sign that the Lord wants him to preach."

"Do you think the Lord wants anybody to preach?" asked Clara.

"Why, yes, of course! What a question!"

"Well, I was wondering if, when God gives a young man a talent for speaking in public, along with an earnest desire to save souls, he did not mean him to use that talent for Him."

"I trust Walter will find another way of using his talent; he is only a boy, and may change his mind a dozen times before he is old enough to study a profession. But the trouble is, he is not the sort of a boy to change; once let him get this notion fixed, and I sometimes think it is already too late to persuade him to change.

Though perhaps, when he is thrown upon his own resources, he will come to his senses."

"But, Mrs. Grenville, you would not do that!"

"Indeed, I would! Of course, I shall provide for his education, or at least a college course, and then if he chooses to throw away his advantages and his prospects, he must take the consequences."

Almost endless as well as numberless discussions were held between mother and son upon this very question. Walter was a well grown boy with a fine mental as well as physical development. As a student he was in advance of most boys of sixteen, being prepared for college; but, as his mother thought him too young to enter, he was studying at home, not willing to lay aside his books for a few months while he should grow older.

Their discussions invariably ended by Mrs. Grenville saying, "Well, Walter, it seems to me that a profession which was good enough for your father should be good enough for you."

Then Walter would reply, "That would be all right, mother, only if God wants me somewhere else?"

"But, suppose you should take into your head to go out to Africa or India? No, Walter,

I can never give you up! I might as well bury you!"

"Mother! don't say that!" said Walter, pleadingly, one day when his mother had been more emphatic than usual.

There came a day, not long after, when Mrs. Grenville recalled this conversation, with the feeling that God was taking her at her word.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."

MEANTIME, some other matters had, at least up to a certain point, adjusted themselves quite to Mrs. Grenville's mind. Since that Sabbath afternoon when Mr. Baxter left the new waltz upon the piano, he had made no more Sunday calls upon Miss Brown; indeed, for several months he had made no calls at all upon that young lady; but one evening he walked home from Mrs. Grenville's with her, and evidently he found her quite as fascinating as ever, and, as they parted, he said:—

"Miss Brown, I owe you an apology."

"An apology! What for?"

"For my rudeness! For it can be called nothing else. I own I was vexed at your refusal to practise the waltz, and entirely without reason; you have a perfect right to your views as to the sacredness of the Sabbath, and I ought to have respected them. May I come and see you again?"

And so it came about that Mr. Baxter resumed his calls, and made them even more

frequent than ever before. Mrs. Grenville was delighted; indeed, she had much to do with bringing about the renewal of the friendly relations between her favorites. She had arranged for the evening at her house by inviting the choir to tea, and she had planned the walk home. A little conversation previously held with Mr. Baxter, had led to this action upon her part.

"Why is it that you have left off calling upon Miss Brown?" she asked, one morning when he had come in to talk about some new music for the choir. She added, "You must excuse an old woman's inquisitiveness!"

Inasmuch as Mrs. Grenville was not more than six or seven years Mr. Baxter's senior, he smiled at this last remark, and replied, "That is all right! I have no objection to telling you why it is." Then he related the episode of the waltz.

"But weren't you rather hasty?" asked Mrs. Grenville, sweetly.

"Perhaps I was; but it was so unexpected! We had spent so many Sunday afternoons singing together without any regard to the style of the music, that to be set back so suddenly in that way tried me considerably."

"But surely she has a right to her own opinions?"

"Certainly; but she cannot expect me to conform mine to hers."

"Are you sure?" Mrs. Grenville's tone was persuasive, as only she knew how to speak. "Might there not be a mutual concession, which would make a satisfactory adjustment of affairs?"

"Stella Brown is not the sort of a girl to give up her ideas of duty for the sake of a friendship, even," said Mr. Baxter.

"No — not while they continue to be her ideas; but you know, perhaps, that young church members are likely to be a little extreme; some of us older ones know that the things which we were once quite sure were not at all right or proper have come to occupy a less important place in our thoughts, and we have learned that there is a medium ground upon which we can meet our friends who are not church members, and thus win instead of repelling them."

Notice that Mrs. Grenville, in her conversation with Mr. Baxter, did not say "Christian," but always "church member." She seemed instinctively to understand that the name Christian would bring to Mr. Baxter's lips that peculiar curve which told too plainly of his hatred of the Christian religion. And, notwithstanding Mrs. Grenville's low standard of Christian-

ity, she did not like to call up that sneering expression by the use of the word. She continued: "Stella has not got beyond the plane of hard duty founded upon her theories. But in time, like the rest of us, her ideas will tone down somewhat, and she will be more ready to accord to other people the same privilege she maintains for herself — the right to act according to their own convictions.

"Now, I am so sorry to have you two people upon scarcely speaking terms; I know it is unpleasant for you, and I am sure it troubles her. I have noticed in the choir that there was something of an unpleasantness between you, but I could not get at it. So I determined to come right to the point; and now I am going to try to bring about a reconciliation. You know, 'Blessed are the peacemakers.'"

"Well, what do you advise?" asked Mr. Baxter.

"Oh, I do not advise! I only suggest. At least, I know what I would do if I were a young man and had misunderstood a young lady whom I esteemed."

"I do not think I misunderstood her. Her language was very explicit."

"Oh, yes, I know! I do not mean that you misunderstood her words, or her meaning even, in that particular instance. I refer to your mis-

conception of her character. You misunderstood her as a woman, and took what she expressed in the flood-tide of her enthusiasm for a revelation of her real self; do you see?"

"Yes, I begin to understand; I suppose I have been stupid; but Stella Brown is not one to be carried away by enthusiasm. I have an idea that she still holds to her views which she expressed that afternoon; and that she will continue to hold them."

"You do not understand me yet! She will hold to them so long as she looks upon herself as a martyr to her convictions; you have helped, by your evident disapproval, to establish her in any fanatical notions she may have taken up. She thinks now that she is suffering for the truth's sake."

"Perhaps you are right," said Mr. Baxter.

"Now," continued Mrs. Grenville, "if you would make a slight apology, and express your admiration for one who is true to his convictions, etc., Stella would at once imagine that she had by her firmness won you partly over to her way of thinking, and, well — if you do not understand me — I fear I cannot make myself understood."

"Oh, the light breaks in upon me!" said Mr. Baxter, laughing a little. "Thank you; I will think it over."

The result of his thinking and Mrs. Grenville's planning combined, was as I have told you; that the friendliness was re-established, and by degrees the intimacy increased. He came frequently, always having some ostensible purpose other than just a call. Sometimes he brought new music; sometimes it was a book; again some flowers or some choice fruit which he had brought from the city; or perhaps it was a box of such confectionery as could only come from Huydon's. He remarked to Mr. Brown that whenever that gentleman did not care to stay in his office late enough to take his daughter home from the choir rehearsal, he would be very happy to act as her escort. And you do not need to be told that Mr. Brown frequently found it irksome waiting. After a time Mr. Baxter dropped into the Young People's Meeting; he even spoke quite favorably of the work of the society, and asked to be allowed to contribute to their funds by way of the envelope collection. Thus in many ways, by slow degrees, Mr. Baxter was cementing the bond between himself and Miss Brown; he had profited by Mrs. Grenville's hints, and in all his intercourse with her was careful to evince a regard for her views, though he sometimes mildly disagreed with her. And she — was it true, as their friend had said, that her

opinions and theories were being modified? Did she hold less strict views of what the Christian life ought to be? Had she already dropped to a lower plane of spiritual life? It naturally came about that she was much at Mrs. Grenville's; would she fall in with that lady's way of thinking? She was at that point where so many make shipwreck of their happiness, and imperil their Christian faith. How would she pass it?

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

MISS BROWN stood at the corner of the street for a moment, undecided what to do. She had been down street all the morning, and, having been detained at one or two places longer than she had expected, she found, upon glancing at her watch, that if she took time to go home to dinner, she would miss the train which she intended to take for the city. After a moment's hesitation, she determined to take her luncheon at the new coffee-rooms. Stepping in at a side entrance, she seated herself at a private table and ordered her coffee and sandwich. The outer room was pretty well filled, and the hum of conversation blended with rattle of dishes; now and then sentences spoken the other side of the screen reached her ear, but she paid little heed, until presently a strangely familiar voice uttered words which startled her out of her abstraction.

"Well, the fanaticism of some people has served the rest of us a good turn," was the remark which arrested her attention.

"What do you mean?" was asked in response, and the second voice was recognized by the listener at once.

"Why, you are, I suppose, aware that this enterprise is carried on by the temperance people, and, while I do not agree with them in their extreme views, I find this practical outgrowth of their ideas a very convenient arrangement for me. I had about made up my mind to move down town, though I much prefer my present quarters, but it took too much time to go home for lunch, and I often went without. Now, as I do not care for anything stronger than coffee, I am very well accommodated; but I am quite willing that those who want something else should have it. I do not understand how a person can presume to dictate to others what they shall or shall not drink. But, as long as I am suited, I ought to be satisfied. The thing is well managed."

"Yes, it is a good thing; just what we needed, and I am glad that there were some fanatics, as you call them, to start it. I tell you, Baxter, there is no use in denying it, or trying to get around the fact, whether we believe in it or not, we do reap benefits from the Christian religion."

"Yes, the practical working out of the theories of these people is a good thing for human-

ity. It cannot be denied that they have hit upon the most perfect set of laws which could be devised, but it seems a pity that men should believe so improbable and absurd a thing as that Divinity should step into humanity, as they say the man they call Jesus did."

"Then," said the other, "you do not believe in the divinity of Christ?"

"I do not believe in him at all! I do not believe that there ever was such a person!"

"Why, Baxter! I did not know you went so far as that!" said his friend.

"Well, I do go just that far, though I do not often speak so plainly. The truth is, I have no taste for argument. I think what I please, and let other people do the same. There is one way in which I differ from people who call themselves Christians; they want everybody to think and believe just as they do; not satisfied with their own idiocy, or what amounts to that, they try to bring the rest of us to the same point. Now, I do not object to showing my colors when the occasion demands it, but I do not believe in flaunting my obnoxious flag in the faces of other people. There is but one man in town, so far as I know, who believes as I do, and he has too much of the *unknowable* and of the mystical in his speculations; I am more matter-of-fact, more of an out-and-out infidel."

"And who is the other to whom you refer?"

Almost breathlessly Stella Brown waited for the answer, and she was not surprised or horrified when it came: —

"Brown."

"What, Chet Brown?"

"Yes, people call him a moralist, but he is a sort of a spiritualist. I cannot follow him in all his vagaries, but we agree pretty well in the main. Neither of us has any faith in the doctrines of the church."

"But you go to church, and even sing their hymns," said the friend.

"Yes, why not? There is no harm in them; but as for believing any of the stuff that we sing, that is quite another thing," said Mr. Baxter, with a light laugh.

At this point, Miss Brown, who had hastily summoned a waiter and paid for her almost untasted coffee, left the place, a bright red spot on either cheek telling of suppressed feeling. Was this the man whom she had almost decided to marry? There could be no mistake; both voices were perfectly familiar, and had not his companion addressed Mr. Baxter by name several times? Three days before he had asked Miss Brown to be his wife, and she had promised him a final answer that very evening. The importance of going into the city that

afternoon was suddenly lessened; it had shrunk into small proportions beside the stupendous question which had all at once unsettled itself, after she had supposed she had made a final decision.

The family were surprised when she walked in while they were still at the table, but she only said: —

"I decided not to go to the city. I do not feel quite equal to it to-day," and went up to her own room. There she fought out the battle. It was not a long battle; there was no question from the beginning which side would win; indeed the victory was won. Satan was vanquished in that hour when the revelation came to her of the real character of the man whom she had so nearly promised to marry. In a public place, not caring who heard, he had assailed the things which he knew she held sacred, had ridiculed her faith. More, had expressed his unbelief in and hatred of the religion of Christ. Yet she had thought him almost a Christian. His constant church attendance, his occasional dropping in at the Young People's Meeting, his desire to help along in money matters, had been to her indications of a real interest in religion. She saw it all now. These things had been done to please her. She saw too that with her own increasing intimacy with

Mr. Baxter and Mrs. Grenville there had come into her heart and life more conformity to the world, at a loss of spiritual power; else she had not been so blinded. But she was wide-awake now. Marry this hater of Christianity! Never! And, as I have said, in this sense the victory was won; the battle was over. But oh, the long, hard contest yet to come. How was she to put at once out of her life and thoughts the interests and hopes, and joys and plans, which had centred in this friendship which she must now put away from her.

Perhaps it is not strange that to a girl brought up as Miss Brown had been, by an unbelieving father, with no teaching upon the subject, it had not seemed a wrong thing to marry a man who was not altogether in sympathy with her upon religious subjects. Remember, her Christian life had been only a brief one, and only a few of its lessons had been learned. Moreover, she had been blinded by seeming perfection in every other respect. For Mr. Baxter was an exemplary young man; his outward life would put to shame that of many of his associates who were professed followers of Christ; but that one little glimpse of the dark fountain within, of the real Mr. Baxter, was all that was needed to cause Stella Brown to shrink back from the step she was about to take.

It was not a false excuse which she sent down to the gentleman when he came that evening, for the excitement of the afternoon had thrown her into a nervous headache, unfitting her for the interview. Along with this explanation she sent this note: —

MR. BAXTER:

Dear Friend, — I was in the coffee-rooms this morning and overheard your remarks expressive of your contempt for the doctrines of my religion, and your hatred of the faith which is to me more than life or *love*. Do you need any other reply to your question of three days ago?

Ever your friend, STELLA BROWN.

Mr. Baxter had his answer.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Wherefore dealest Thou thus with Thy servants?"

"STELLA!" It was Mr. Brown's voice at the door of his daughter's room. The hour was long past midnight, but she responded quickly: —

"Yes, father; what is it?"

"Freddie is very sick! Will you come at once?" The sound of slippered feet died away as the father hastened back to the suffering child. Miss Brown threw on her wrapper, and was there almost as soon as he. It was evident that in the darkness a dread visitor had stolen in upon them, and was about to bear away the household darling. As Stella came swiftly but noiselessly to the side of the crib, the little fellow, looking up, said, faintly, "'Tella, sing!" and, lifting him in her arms as was her wont, she sang softly, with trembling voice, "Jesus Loves Me," and "There's a Happy Land," both favorites of the child; and again and again, between the paroxysms of disease, she sang of Jesus and of the home in heaven. The physician, who had been hastily summoned, came and applied his remedies with skilled hand, but

in vain; and in the faint gray dawn, in response to the pleading look, Stella sang, with choking voice, "Now I lay me down to sleep," and as she repeated the words "I pray the Lord my soul to take," the blue eyes closed, and the baby had gone home. So suddenly does the call come oftentimes!

For more than a quarter of a century had Mr. and Mrs. Brown lived in that house where their wedded life began, and in all that time death had never come nigh their dwelling. Connections and friends had been called away, but up to that hour the home circle had remained unbroken; and now, in this sudden and unexpected snapping of the link, it was as if they were swept away from their anchorage, and were drifting upon a turbulent sea; they had rested securely in the blessings of health and prospect of long life, and with a lofty pity and cold philosophy had looked upon the bereavements of others; they had even said to each other that when their turn came, if it should come, they would show to the world, and especially to Christians, how such things could be borne. But, now that the storm had burst upon them suddenly, the strong man was bowed down with grief; his unsullied moral character did not support him nor afford him a refuge; his aspirations, which he had often

declared stood for prayer in his creed, pressed back upon his soul like leaden weights; — turn which way he would, there was only darkness. The child Freddie, the promising bud which in his looking forward he had seen opening and expanding into the full flower of manhood, becoming the strength and stay of his own later years, had passed on into what he had been wont to speak of as the unknowable, the realm of shadowy uncertainty. Oh, for power to pierce the beyond, to know if within that now waxen and inanimate frame there had dwelt an immortal spirit, and to know the fate of that spirit! As he sat in the silence of the room to which he had withdrawn with bowed head and perturbed spirit, he seemed to hear Stella's trembling voice saying, softly, "I pray the Lord my soul to take." And he said within himself, "I said that prayer at my mother's knee. She believed it; Stella believes it. It is a happy delusion. Stella bears it better than the rest of us, or at least better than the mother and myself. I believe she has won the other children to her way of thinking. She bears everything in the way of trials wonderfully; she bore my angry words the other day. I *was* angry to think she had thrown Baxter overboard. Freddie was her idol, but she bears the burden for us all."

Presently Stella tapped softly at the door, and, entering, said, "Father, Dr. Roberts is downstairs; he wants to know if you would like to have him make any arrangements for laying away our baby's body."

"Baxter was here this morning, as you know, and I left it with him to order the casket and carriages. I suppose he will see to everything."

"Yes; but you would like to have Dr. Roberts take charge of the services? — the religious services?" said Stella, wondering if her father meant to carry his theories into practice, and lay little Freddie away without a prayer even. She could not bear that.

"Why, Stella, I do not know that we need Dr. Roberts" — began Mr. Brown; but Stella interrupted before he should say words which he would be too proud to recall.

"But, father, you know that since Dr. Roberts' little Charlie went away he has petted our Freddie a great deal, and I think it would be a comfort to him to conduct the services, and, besides, he is my pastor." And Stella's voice shook with suppressed sobs.

"Well, child, have it as you like; it does not matter; you know I do not believe in unmeaning ceremonies, and all this talk which we usually hear at burials is unmeaning to me;

but it can't hurt the baby, and will make no difference to me. I presume your mother will be willing that you should have your way."

Surely, this man's bitter hatred for the Gospel of Christ was softening — though he still stood entrenched in his fortress of unbelief — else he had not yielded this point.

"Let the service be brief and simple," said Stella, in consultation with her pastor. "But Christian burial my Freddie must have. Do you know that I never knew that in this Christian land they ever dispensed with prayer at a funeral, until I went with father to Judge West's burial? It was dreadful!

"Ever since I became a Christian I have hoped that my father and mother might be reached through Freddie. I have taught him, and sang with him, and always with the thought, 'A little child shall lead them,' and now this is the end."

"Not the end, I trust; it may be but the beginning," said Dr. Roberts. "Perhaps this going down into the valley of the shadow of death may be to catch something of the light that gleams from the other side."

The hours went by, until the time had come when they must put away their dear one. As an old friend of the family, Mr. Baxter had been in several times since the blow fell, and at

Mr. Brown's request had taken upon himself the details of the funeral, and Miss Brown was sincerely grateful to him for his thoughtfulness and for his efficient service; but she wished it had been some one else to whom she should be grateful. She feared his influence over her father in these first hours of sorrow; but if she could have known how in his secret heart her father turned away from his friend's meaningless words of attempted consolation, she would not have feared. His cold, vapid philosophy had suddenly failed to interest the man who had lost his treasure, and forever, if these things were truth.

When they had laid the little body in the flower-lined casket, Clara Randall went up to Stella's room and asked her to come down, that they might consult about some little detail. As the two stood together beside the casket, Stella said, softly, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection."

As she spoke, glancing up, she met Mr. Baxter's gaze; he was standing behind the partly drawn draperies of the bay window, but came forward as she recognized his presence and said, gravely, "Good morning, Miss Brown; we thought perhaps you would prefer this arrangement to that which was first suggested?"

"I do like it better, thank you; father and mother will be very grateful to you."

"How is your mother this morning?" asked Dr. Roberts, who had just come in.

"She is still very much prostrated; she told me a little while ago that she felt as if all her supports had suddenly gone out from under her, and that she had nothing to lean upon."

"If she could but rest upon the Everlasting Arm," said Dr. Roberts. And Mr. Baxter vexed his small soul with pity for these deluded people who were *so sure*.

CHAPTER XX.

"How much owest thou my Lord?"

"WE have been prospered beyond what we could have hoped or asked. Much of the opposition to our new departure has died away. We have increased in numbers, our members have been strengthened and helped, and many who a few months ago thought they could not speak a word for the Master, are now among our most earnest workers. And the thought has come to me, with great force, that we are now strong enough to branch out in new lines, that, with God as our helper, we may make an aggressive movement. May we not advance upon the enemy's works? This thought has been in my heart for sometime, and, after consultation with the various committees, it has been determined to make some special efforts." This from the president of the society, at a meeting late in November.

"As a beginning," he continued, "the Missionary Committee have arranged for a missionary conference to be held the first week in December. There will be addresses from re-

turned missionaries, discussions upon methods of work, with hours set apart for conference and prayer. Let us take hold of this matter, remembering that it is our meeting, and that its success depends upon the energy with which we set about carrying forward the movement. Therefore let us, first, remember the committee in our closets; then let us be ready to aid them in any way they may desire; and then let us make room for the meeting in our plans and engagements, as well as in our hearts and prayers."

A few days later, printed programmes, modest and unpretentious, were scattered through the congregation, and sent to the various missionary organizations of the other churches. All who were interested in missions, or who were desirous of doing more for the cause, were invited to come and consult together as to the best ways of carrying out the Saviour's command to go into all the world and preach the gospel. These little missives, the neat appearance of which emphasized the courteous invitation, caused some comment in various quarters. St. Paul's was not without its representatives of the class who do not believe in missions. And these were naturally stirred by the announcement. Mrs. Grenville especially was disturbed; it was such a piece of folly

to do anything to draw the minds of the young people away from the work at home. Their own church needed all the time and money that could be devoted to church work ; it was a great blunder to divide their forces. Dr. Roberts was well-meaning, but this was certainly a mistake. A good general would not send off detachments to skirmish about the country when all were needed to meet the enemy in front. It were better to mass their forces, and concentrate their strength upon the strongholds right at home.

Mr. Collins thought the young folks were going on too fast altogether ; they seemed to be taking the work right out of the hands of the older people ; he believed in the officers of the church keeping matters under their control ; by what right were the young folks giving out notices for meetings to be held on week days in the church ? When he was young, the church was almost never opened except upon the Sabbath and for the service preparatory to the communion. Even the weekly prayer meeting was generally held at the house of the pastor or one of the deacons. *Now*, the young folks were occupying the church almost every evening, to the detriment of the furniture and carpets, and the burning of unlimited quantities of coal and gas. As for missions, the church con-

tributed annually through the board, the proper channel, and, as was fitting, the heads of the families were the almoners. No, he did not believe in this conference arranged and run by a lot of boys and girls.

Deacon Miller said: "Oh, it is all right, — I have no objection, but it will make trouble. There are those who will not like it, and it would be wiser to let the older people manage these things, and so avoid unpleasant feeling. I am sorry — sorry! But Dr. Roberts is in favor of it; so it must go on, I suppose."

And it *did* go on! Some of the remarks came to the knowledge of the young people, and if any were disposed to resent them, Dr. Grey and Fred Castleton, with Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, counselled quiet and patience.

"Only let us move carefully," said Dr. Grey. "We will not step except where we are sure of our ground, and we will win all these people after a while. They are really our friends, and they are troubled because they think we are making mistakes. We must not prove our folly by getting angry if they do not fall in with us in all our plans."

Mrs. Grenville was the most aggrieved; this was a sore subject to her. She had become possessed with the idea that Walter was inclined to the plan of fitting himself for a foreign

missionary, and she looked with disfavor upon everything that had to do with the subject. She wanted to keep him away from meetings of this sort, and here the society was working in direct opposition to her desires. She felt as though it were a personal affront. Looking upon the matter in this light, imagine her dismay when Clara Randall ran in one morning, saying, in the same breath with her greeting, "Dear Mrs. Grenville, I suppose it is only a form to be gone through with, this asking you to entertain one of the missionaries who is to speak next week! I told the girls I should not hesitate to send a guest here without asking leave, but thought better of it, and concluded to go through with the ceremony of asking. It is Miss B——, and they say she is very interesting and lovely, and that everybody enjoys her. She will come on Monday by the evening train. Will you send a carriage for her, or shall I send some one to bring her up?"

Mrs. Grenville was too much astonished to speak at first, and she took time to wonder if Clara was really as confident as she seemed. At first she was inclined to consider her presuming, but, come to think of it, it was perfectly natural to take it for granted that Mrs. Grenville would be willing to entertain a guest; she was famous for her hospitality, and she had

repeatedly said to Clara and others, "You need not at any time hesitate to send strangers to me; there is always room and servants at their command, even if I cannot give myself to their entertainment," so it was not as strange a proceeding as would otherwise have appeared. And what could the lady do but accept the situation gracefully?

"Mrs. Grenville will entertain Miss B——!" was Clara's report at the next committee-meeting.

"Are you sure?" asked one of the girls. "She told me that she considered the whole scheme as a great piece of foolishness, and worse, as a positive wrong, and that she had washed her hands of the whole affair."

"Well, I can't help it. She promised to send her carriage to the six forty-five train to meet a returned missionary," said Clara.

"I don't see how you managed her!" said the other.

Nothing had been farther from Mrs. Grenville's intention than attendance upon any of the sessions of that conference. She had thought that Walter would act as her escort, but one of the headaches to which he was predisposed had come on during the afternoon, and he was unable to go out that first evening. Mrs. Grenville's sense of what was her duty as hostess would not permit her to send her guest

alone in the carriage to the chapel, especially as Walter did not need her. For it was not unusual for him to be the victim of headaches, and he only required absolute quiet. Hence it was that Mrs. Grenville was among the first to enter the chapel that evening. She was not sorry that Walter was detained; indeed, she had hoped that something might happen to interfere with his attendance upon the sessions of this distasteful conference. And she even said within herself, "If only the headache would be just severe enough to keep him at home for two days, I should look upon it as quite providential!"

The first hour, as was fitting, was given up to earnest prayer. This was the first time Mrs. Grenville had attended a meeting of the Young People's Society, and she was astonished at what she heard. She had not dreamed that their meetings were like this. But it was not in the prayers, not in the hymns in which she joined, not in the words spoken by earnest-hearted Christians, that she found her message, but in one line of a little leaflet which she picked up as she was going out. The heading caught her eye and fixed itself upon her heart; the words were spoken centuries ago. She had read them a hundred times; yet they came to her in that hour as a personal question, "How much owest thou my Lord?"

CHAPTER XXI.

"And kept back part of the price."

THE missionary conference was a thing of the past, but influences were set going which, like the ripples in the clear lake, will widen and widen until they break upon the shores of eternity. Some of these results, so far as we in our human dimness of vision can see, I want to tell you about. First, a little more in reference to Mrs. Grenville's problem: "How much owest thou my Lord?" was the puzzling question that clamored for solution; strange how puzzling inquiries will sometimes persistently hold to the front. The leaflet which she carried home with her, and which had so disturbed the evenness of her thoughts, answered the question in a way that should have satisfied any Christian heart; but at that period of her life, Mrs. Grenville was not capable of understanding or willing to receive all its teachings. "It goes too far," she said, within herself. "No one can live up to that standard."

And she read it over once more, "Consecrate all . . . living unto the Lord, . . . 'even thine own self besides,' . . . talents, strength, time, money, friends, children," assenting, in a half-hearted way, until she came to the last item. No, not that! Surely, if one gave to the service of the Lord everything else, children — one's only child might be held back! In a sense, she was willing to give her boy even, if only she might dictate *how* he was to be used in the Master's service. The leaflet closed its message with words something like these: "The Lord will one day claim his own. If you will not render unto Him that which thou owest, one day you may find yourself deposed from your stewardship! He may take from you what you are not willing to use for Him!"

Mrs. Grenville had listened to eloquent addresses upon missions. She had sat under powerful sermons upon the subject of personal consecration, without being moved; but God often uses very insignificant means to accomplish his purpose. Sometimes a trifle will bring unrest into a satisfied soul, and thus it was with Mrs. Grenville; she tried in vain to throw off the impression made upon her mind by the reading of the single printed page, and when she could not throw it off, she sought for

a satisfactory answer to that searching question: "How much owest thou my Lord?"

She made unwonted efforts to entertain her missionary guest, thinking thus to pay a part of her debt to the Master. She attended all the sessions of the conference, and when the time for the money offerings came, she astonished herself and others by her generosity; she was seeking to pay her debt with gold. She did not stop there. She determined to consecrate her life anew to the *service of the church.* She had always been devoted to certain interests of the church, or of that branch of it known as St. Paul's, but the time for the sort of work to which she had been accustomed seemed to have gone by. The rising tide of spirituality was sweeping away the desire for entertainments. The young people, immersed in the Master's work, had no time for the old style of work for the church. And so Mrs. Grenville determined to accept the new order of things, and took up a new line of work. The following Thursday evening saw her in the prayer-room, and the next Sabbath she came to offer her services to the superintendent as a Sabbath-school teacher. She began to take an interest in the work of the young people, and in many unaccustomed ways made herself very helpful. Thus she was trying to pay her debt.

Dr. Roberts looked on and wondered if he had misunderstood her all these years. All the time she was saying within herself, perhaps only half-consciously, "If God will only let me keep my boy, I will consecrate to Him all the service of my life, and all my means to His use." Then a thought occurred to her by way of compromise, though she did not put it in her thought nor in her prayers that it was a compromise: she determined to educate some other woman's son for the work of preaching the gospel. Did she think it would be easier for some other mother to give up her boy to the cause, even to the cause, it might be, of foreign missions? Well, perhaps she was right if she thought that. There are mothers whose boys were given to the work of the ministry away back in their cradlehood, and these mothers have never thought to take the gift from off the altar.

Walter had not been able to attend a single session of the conference. The attack of headache had been unusually severe and lasting, and, while the mother's heart was full of loving compassion and tender sympathy for her boy in his suffering, she yet looked upon the sickness as quite providential. She reasoned that Walter was of a somewhat excitable temperament, and would be quite apt to be carried away by the

enthusiasm of the occasion, — for she was forced to admit that there was much enthusiasm manifested, — and he might be induced to make pledges which would afterwards be regretted. Decisions which involved the interests of a lifetime should be made in cooler moments. If only she could keep Walter from committing himself by a vow until he was a few years older, she was sure he would then see the wisdom of her course and thank her for her thoughtfulness and watchfulness. Ah! could that mother but have known what was passing in her boy's heart during those hours of pain and weariness! Could she have heard the softly whispered words, "Dear Saviour, I place my hand in Thine, — lead me wheresoever Thou wouldst have me go!" She would not have been so sure that her boy was, as she expressed it in her inmost thought, "safe for the present, at least." Ah! how ideas of things differ! How many a mother would have counted her boy *safe* with that prayer upon his lips!

And could she have heard him repeating that beautiful consecration hymn of Miss Havergal, lingering ever upon the words, —

> "Take my lips and let them be
> Filled with messages from Thee,"—

she would not have gone on so complacently filling her days with a service that was new to

her, trying to satisfy her soul with this answer to the ever-recurring question as to "what owest thou?"

She had decided that it was not wise to talk to Walter about his "notion," and she said to a friend, "I think that it will wear off; indeed, I think he is less intense in his desire now than he was a few months ago. I have been very much troubled about it, but I look at it differently now; it is an outgrowth of religious enthusiasm, and you know, as he grows older, that will tone down. If I keep my cool common-sense to the front, and succeed in holding him back from any committal of himself in this matter, I trust that in a few years he will see it as I do. He will then realize that with his wealth he can do more than he could as a minister; and I have no doubt that when he brings his mature judgment to bear upon the question, he will settle down and do his work in his appointed place."

And so the woman argued; and so she satisfied herself, and tried to compromise with her Lord — making a half-surrender of her life service, willing to do many things that others would have shrunk from, but not willing to give all.

Well, Mrs. Grenville does not stand alone in this half-way living for Christ. How many in these days are putting "church work" before *full surrender?*

CHAPTER XXII.

"Thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that."

YOU remember Edith Castleton — the bright young girl who, with her brother, raced down the hill toward the church, that first Monday evening in January? She listened that evening to Fred's words of renewed consecration with something of wonder, and with much of admiration. It was certainly very manly, she thought, and he looked so handsome. The one object in the world which Edith Castleton admired above all others was her brother Fred, and she listened to him with pride in her heart, though she did not understand what he could mean when he expressed determination to live a better life. He suited her well enough just as he was; she was certain that he approached very near to perfection already. However, as this which sounded like a new departure evidently raised him in the estimation of certain people whose esteem was worth having, and made him a person of more consequence, though why she could not understand, she was quite satisfied. And later, when

the Society of Christian Endeavor was organized, she realized that it was a good thing for Fred; she was proud of the position he occupied as one of the leaders in the society, and as during the year the interest in the movement increased and spread into neighboring churches, and Fred was now and then sent out as a helper in the matter of forming new societies, the sister's heart swelled with pride. Not that she ever voiced these sentiments. No, indeed! And so far as any one could discover from anything she said, the Society of Christian Endeavor, its plans and aims, occupied a very small place in her thought. As for joining, she flatly refused in the outset, and persisted in her refusal. As an active member she could not join, for she not only was not "willing to be called a Christian," but she had no desire to become one, nor any intention of doing so; certainly, not at present. In fact, she declared that she was quite satisfied with her life, and saw no necessity of anything better. And as an associate member? — no, indeed! She "did not believe in any society which had cliques"; "a sort of inside ring"; "an aristocratic circle!" And thus, with flippant remarks, she parried all efforts to induce her to place herself under the society's influence and prayers, by becoming an associate member; she did not care to be

brought under Christian influence outside her home. She did not want to place herself in a position to be prayed for, and she *did want* to be let alone.

After all, she attended the prayer-meetings with something of regularity, saying, whenever any one suggested that she should join the society, "Now, see here! If you don't want me to come to the meetings, why just say so, and I'll stay away! I can just as well as not, only Fred likes to have me come with him; but I'll stay away if you say so!"

She belonged to an Agassiz Club and to a literary society, which, with school duties, kept her well occupied; yet she tramped away to the woods in the early spring, and brought home great baskets of trailing arbutus, which she sent to the Floral Committee, with the explanation that she had more than she wanted, and thought that perhaps the committee could find use for it. And later, she drove to the lake for water-lilies, which reached the same destination as the mayflowers. Her last winter's cloak and hat found their way to the Missionary Committee; yet she possessed the utmost indifference as to the existence and prosperity of the organization. Fred was very anxious about this careless, almost reckless, sister, and many petitions he sent up to the Throne, asking that

the Holy Spirit might touch her heart, causing her to stop and think.

And thus the months had passed until the missionary conference. How often it happens that out of some effort of ours, honestly put forth, results appear altogether different from any we have expected, or hoped for, or planned for! It is true that we often build better than we know. The Missionary Committee, in planning for this gathering, had hoped to awaken an interest in missions among a class who, for want of information, were not yet awake upon the subject, and also they hoped to increase the enthusiasm among those already to some degree active, by bringing the subject up before them in its many phases; but they had not counted upon any direct influence being brought to bear upon persons who were not already Christians: and if asked what class of people the meeting was designed to reach, they would have replied, unhesitatingly, "Christians!"

Some extra meetings under the management of the proper committee had already been arranged to follow, designed especially to reach those who were not Christians.

Edith Castleton sent down her floral treasures for the decoration of the church for the missionary gathering, delighting herself in the

thought that two splendid callas were in perfection, and that her loveliest geraniums and roses had bloomed for the occasion. She had carefully watched through the intricacies of mixing and flavoring and baking a wonderful loaf of mountain cake, and had prepared with skilled hand a delicious salad for the noonday luncheon, to be served at the church parlors. And now, in her most becoming costume, she was seated with the audience as a careless observer. She picked up a copy of the leaflet which so moved Mrs. Grenville, and tossed it aside, with the remark to her companion, "It seems that the very pews are to preach today!" And then, throwing back her furs, and adjusting the hassock at her feet to her comfort, she studied the programme.

"The Plea of Nations," she read, and commented. "That is the exercise they wanted me to take part in; but, as I do not belong, I would not do it; besides, how would I look up there, making a plea for nations that I don't care a snap of my finger for? I wouldn't be such a hypocrite! The only thing I care about hearing, besides that solo, is Dr. Legar's address. I suppose it will be very scholarly." Miss Edith prolonged her remarks until she perceived that a hush had come over the assembly, and that the devotional exercise was about to begin.

"Dear me!" she whispered to her companion, "I wish I had not come so early! This society are wild upon the subject of prayer-meetings. Here they have tacked one to the beginning and another at the end of this conference, and I presume they will throw half a dozen in between times!" Then she leaned forward — in a devotional attitude? Well, perhaps she called it such; — her arm resting upon the back of the pew in front, her head in such a manner as made it possible for her to take in a view of the larger part of the congregation. From admiring her own neatly-gloved hand, and the fall of rich lace in her sleeve, she fell to studying the hats and cloaks, and the attitudes of those within range of her vision.

Perhaps there was not one in that waiting congregation who, judging from previous habits of thought, or preparation made, from outward appearance, or inward desire, was less likely to be reached by anything which might be said or done in that meeting than this same Edith Castleton. Yet, the words were to be spoken, the influence of which would change the whole tenor of her life. And she was to find them, not in the song of the famous soloist, nor in the eloquent address of the scholarly Dr. Legar, though both of these answered her expectations of a rich treat, nor yet in the earnest word of

Miss B——, the returned missionary, but in a little story which was told by Clara Randall; it was an oft-repeated story, though, in her ignorance of all sorts of missionary literature, it was new to Edith. A little boy, whose heart had been thrilled in listening to the addresses at a public missionary meeting, wept because he had nothing to give when the offerings were called for; but suddenly, as the collector was passing, he motioned to him to put the plate down beside him, and then he placed both his feet upon it, to signify that he gave himself.

"And," said Clara, "I have often thought, what are *our* offerings of silver and gold if we withhold *ourselves!*"

In anticipation of the "collection," Edith had brought a bit of gold to lay upon the plate, but her heart was touched by the little story, and she said within herself, "What a miserable fool I am, to think to do my part with a gold-piece!" How insignificant it seemed to her as she laid it upon the plate. Suddenly, as the clinking of dropping coins around her was still sounding in her ears, she bowed her head and said in her heart:—

"I will no longer hold back the offering which I know I ought to give. Lord, I give *myself to Thy service!*"

CHAPTER XXIII.

"And have tasted the good word of God."

EDITH CASTLETON never did things half way; she had been reckless and careless in the extreme, indifferent alike to the claims of the gospel and to the pleadings of friends. As for personal religion, she would have none of it; but now, with that sudden resolve, there had come into her life, to control all her future, new purposes. And these were not wavering nor transient purposes. From that hour when she bowed her head and gave herself to the Lord, she was out-and-out in her determination to live by that resolve. Edith had no preconceived notions as to when and how she should be converted — of course not, for she had never given the subject thought. She had at times, when the matter had been pressed upon her, felt vaguely that it would be well to attend to it sometime, but the sometime was to her view very far off. Away on beyond early womanhood, perhaps when she was as old as her mother, she would be ready to settle down and join the church.

That evening as she walked slowly up the hill, she was thinking something like this: "Here I have been and promised to serve the Lord! I never broke a promise in my life! Well, I am glad I promised; it's done now! I wonder what will be the first duty! Queer to be a Christian and not have anybody know it!" Then she stood still a moment — still as if paralyzed — "A Christian! was she that?"

The next day at school one of the girls said, "Edith Castleton! what is the matter with you? You look as though you had heard good news!"

"Perhaps I have; I am not sure, but when I find out if it is good news, I will let you know."

And within herself she said, "*Is* it good news? It sounds like '*There's joy in heaven*'!"

No one was surprised to see her at the next Young People's Meeting, but many *were* surprised when she arose and said, "I have been trying all day to answer the question, Am I a Christian? I cannot tell, but this I know: I have given myself to the Lord in an everlasting covenant! I feel very glad, and safe, and — and all made over new!"

Do you wonder that Fred Castleton immediately sang out: —

"Hallelujah! 'tis done! I believe on the Son!"

But another surprise awaited them; when the

singing ceased, Flossy Miller said: "Dear Christian friends, I am glad my friend here said what she did; it gives me courage to speak. Several months ago I gave my heart to Jesus. He has been very precious to me, but I never have confessed Him as my Saviour. I want to do so to-night, and I want to say that it was through influences that went out from this society that I was led to consider seriously the matter of personal religion!"

What a wonderful meeting that was! Parker Johnson, who, it will be remembered, refused to join the society on account of the pledge, but who often came into the meetings, presently arose and said, "When this Society of Christian Endeavor was organized I stood aloof, because I was unwilling to pledge myself to take up the duties of an active member. That prayer-meeting pledge was my stumbling block; but to-night I have determined to stumble over it no longer. I intend to ask to be admitted to membership, and I pledge myself anew to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ." Dr. Roberts offered the closing prayer, which was throughout a tribute of praise and thanksgiving. The Society of Christian Endeavor felt that a long step forward had been taken. Three new active members waiting to be enrolled.

That was the beginning; for many weeks

after that there was never a meeting without some new voice being heard confessing Christ, and often more than one. Others, who had been standing in the attitude of lookers-on, followed Parker Johnson's example, and applied for admission. Mr. Burrill, who had been waiting to see if the thing turned out to be popular and something that was lasting, gave his name, having concluded that he would not by so doing run much risk of losing his reputation for making only safe investments, whether in business or religion.

Meantime, in that home which had been darkened by the going-out of a young life, a new light had come; for those sorrowing hearts the Sun of Righteousness had risen with healing in His wings. Very slowly those hearts had opened to let in the light and healing. As the stricken father looked the last upon the still form of his child, in which the beautiful soul had for a time dwelt, he could not put aside the questionings as to how and where that soul had gone. "Absent from the body" it surely was; but was this a final separation? Again and again he asked himself the old question, "Does this life end all?" He had tried in the past to make himself believe *that*. He had been accustomed to say, "We do not *know* anything about the future; man may believe a thing is so, but,

after all, it is mere supposition. If we only had facts to build upon, I could accept this which you call Christianity."

One day, Stella was with her father in his office, when he made a similar remark; and she said, "Father, it seems a little queer to me that you should argue in this way about this one subject, when you act in every other matter upon principles exactly the reverse. You do not believe in prayer, because you do not *know* that there is a Being above, and you do not know that prayer is answered; but you sent off, in this afternoon's mail, a dozen letters, some of them addressed to men you have never seen, and to places in which you have never been. I should think that you would wait until you *knew*, before you sent your letters."

"But I do know!"

"How?"

"Why, I have written to them before, and have received answers to my communications."

"But how did you happen to write to them in the first place?"

"Some of them wrote to me first, and I heard of others from people who knew them."

"Yes, I see. Well, father, I have sent my communications up to my Father in heaven, and have received answers. And just as you say you heard of your correspondents through

those who were already acquainted with them, just so I had messages from the Lord through those who know Him. If you had acted upon your theory of first knowing, you would never have had any of this correspondence with these men, which I judge is a profitable matter to you. You would have lost money by your lack of faith; and I suspect that if you carried your theories into practice, you would soon be out of business."

"Oh, but religion is different, Stella!"

"Yes, it *is* different! It is a matter of eternal weight. But, father, it is so simple that even our darling could take it into his heart, and could go out into the other life resting confidingly in the love of Jesus. And if you could but see him as I do, with an innumerable throng in bright array 'before the throne of God,' singing praises to the Redeemer, it would comfort your heart, if you could but feel that he is waiting for you."

"Yes, dear, all that would be very comforting, if one could only believe it; but while I look upon the moral teachings of the Bible as very wonderful, and worthy to be followed out in the lives of men, the historical parts of the book, the unreasonable accounts of the miracles, the story of the incarnation and the resurrection, are too much for me to take as truth."

"Well, father, it was a fact in the days of Christ that people reasoned very much as you do. If you will read one account, you will find that while many believed upon the testimony of the woman of Samaria, that after He abode with the Samaritans two days, 'many more believed because of His own word, and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.' If you would only listen to Him, I am sure you would be forced to believe."

The conversation was interrupted at this point by a gentleman coming in for consultation. In the course of the talk, Mr. Brown, turning to Stella, said: "Daughter, hand me the book behind you, please." Then to his client, "I'll read you what Blackstone says upon this point."

Stella smiled as her father closed the book, saying: "There you have it! There's no going back of that decision."

When the gentleman was gone, she said: "Father, do you suppose I would be able to understand everything in that volume, if I were to begin to study it?"

"Hardly. Why, Stella, do you think of taking up the law?"

"No. Only I was wondering how it would be if a student should enter your office to

study, and should say, I accept some things which this author says because I can understand them; but there is a great deal which seems very unreasonable: I do not understand it, and therefore I cannot accept it."

"Do you think it a parallel case?" asked Mr. Brown, smilingly.

"Perhaps not exactly. But I do think that if you would take the Scriptures as authority from which there is no appeal, and study the Word, you will find the truth there."

The next morning, when Mr. Brown went to his office, he found a Bible upon his desk; it happened to be a morning when business was not pressing, and, some way, the impulse to push the book aside to make room for law books was resisted, and he sat down to the strange occupation of studying the Word of God.

Need I tell you that the reading was blessed to him? Remember, that at home, in her own room, his daughter was praying that the Holy Spirit might direct the reading and send the truth home to her father's heart. It was not in an hour, nor in a day, that the work was done, but slowly he took in the truths of the gospel, until there came an hour when he could say in his heart: "Glory be to Him who is the resurrection and the life. He was dead, and behold, He is alive forevermore. He that believeth in Him, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

CHAPTER XXIV.

"What hath God wrought!"

"I AM very glad if you find comfort in believing this thing, which I have so often heard you declare to be a delusion from beginning to end; but while I congratulate you upon having found a resting-place, I assure you I have no personal interest in the matter; and it is not worth while for us to discuss the subject. I have heard you argue upon the other side too often."

Mr. Baxter spoke stiffly, though his tone was courteous, in reply to his friend Mr. Brown, who had just told him of the new light which had dawned upon his hitherto darkened soul, and of the consolation which he had found in believing in Christ.

"That is just the point I want to speak to you upon," said Mr. Brown. "I *have* argued upon the wrong side, and I want to acknowledge my error, and ask your forgiveness for any injury I may have done you. It comes to me with force, that all my influence has been upon the side of error, and that but for me you might have been at least less firmly established

in unbelief. Baxter, forgive me, and look the matter over carefully by the light of the Scriptures!"

"Humph! You seem to have come to set great store by the Scriptures! I remember that you used to reject the Bible!"

"So I did! But that was before I had studied it. I see now what folly it is to reject that which we know nothing about. I tell you, my friend, a man cannot study the Book without being convinced that it is the truth."

"Nonsense! It would take some outside evidence to convince me!"

"Try it and see; just give a little time to the earnest study of the Bible, and find out for yourself how it is!"

"I haven't time to spend over a lot of myths and fables," returned Baxter.

"That is a lame reason for a man to give who reads as many mythical novels and poems as you do, and those, too, without half the literary merit to be found in the book I wish you to examine. I tell you, Baxter, you dare not do it! You are afraid you will be convinced against your will, and forced to accept that as truth which you have scorned in your heart, and with your lips and life. I repeat it, my friend, you dare not do it lest you be forced to acknowledge your error!"

Mr. Brown spoke warmly; then, in a tender tone, he added, "But I wish you would! I wish you would!"

"Well," replied Mr. Baxter, carelessly, "I am very well satisfied with my present attainments, and I really have neither time nor inclination to pursue the subject. I am glad if you find anything in it; glad for your sake, though I shall miss our pleasant talks. Good morning." And Mr. Baxter bowed, and turned off at a convenient corner, saying to himself, as he took in an extra block for the sake of getting away from the distasteful subject, "Crazy, like all the rest of them! Well, I did not think Chet Brown would lose his balance under sorrow; but Freddy was his idol, and I suppose the loss unsettled his mind. Strange, how real a delusion sometimes becomes! Well, there goes another friendship. Perhaps I should not say that, for Stella assured me that she should never cease to pray for me, and should always look upon me as a friend; and Brown himself professes an interest in me, poor scapegrace, as he has come to consider his former favorite. Well, I have lost a strong ally. I thought that, with her father on my side, I might win the daughter yet. But even Mrs. Grenville was shocked when she found out that I was an out-and-out infidel, and said she would

never have espoused my cause had she known it. They are a pack of fanatics together!"

Mr. Baxter's office-boy opened the door for him, with a book in his hand, which his employer at once recognized as a Bible. "Do you read that book?" he said, with a sneering emphasis upon the last two words.

"Why, yes! At least, I have begun lately to read it. I never used to, but the Christian Endeavor Society have a course of Bible-reading marked out, and most all of us pledged ourselves to follow it. I have done everything this morning — I think you will find it all right, sir — and as I had a little time I thought I would read a little." This last apologetically.

"Oh, it is all right," said Mr. Baxter, absently. He was thinking, "Christian Endeavor! That society haunts me. Yesterday a young fellow refused a glass of beer because at the Christian Endeavor Temperance Conference the pledge had been circulated, and they all signed it. And those two young fellows at my table talk of nothing else. They discuss committees and topics and unions, and then they turn the subject over and go at it again. Even Mrs. Grenville has caught the fever. I wanted her to get up a musical entertainment, and she said that the week of prayer was just at hand, and after that the Christian Endeavor had

planned for a second edition. Really, there seems to be no time for anything rational," and Mr. Baxter dropped the lid of the desk heavily — it might have been accidental, but it sounded like a *bang*. Any way, he resolved that he would change his seat in the dining-room that very day, and that he would not talk to his office-boy, nor go near Mrs. Grenville: he had heard quite enough of Christian Endeavor. But, however he might resolve, it was not so easy to shun the subject. Upon his way to dinner, he met a young girl who was quite a favorite with him, and as she said, "Good morning," he responded gayly, "Whither away, pretty maid?"

"Oh, I am upon the *Errand Committee!*" was her reply. "I am going to take a note up to Eagle Street, for Dr. Roberts."

"The Errand Committee?" questioningly.

"Yes. In the Christian Endeavor we have a committee of seven, one for each day of the week, who do church errands for Dr. Roberts; he says it is astonishing how much he can accomplish, now that he has young feet to go about for him, and we enjoy it, too; besides, we are learning a great many things."

"Humph!" Mr. Baxter had no words to express his contempt. Turn which way he would, this society was bound to confront him. He had a special grudge against the organiza-

tion, for he believed, and with reason, that had it not been for the new direction given to Stella Brown's purposes and interests by her connection with the society, he might have won her, and since his failure in that effort, he had not been very friendly towards the Y. P. S. C. E. He did not prolong the conversation with his little favorite, but walked on rapidly, carrying his contempt upon his face as well as in his heart.

The truth was, the atmosphere of St. Paul's was becoming distasteful to Mr. Baxter. There was a growing spirituality, a religious fervor, a progressive spirit, a prayerful mood, which it was not possible for him to appreciate. It seemed, indeed, as though the old Pentecostal days had come again, when the Lord added to the church daily. The days slipped away until the old year, with its burden of work and of prayers, had gone out, and the new year, with its bright outlook, had slipped into its place. The world's week of prayer was upon them, looked forward to with interest. The regular meetings of church and society had been so blessed that they hoped much of enjoyment and profit from the daily assembling of themselves together; and they were not disappointed. St. Paul's had experienced many sensations during the year just passed — but perhaps none

more decided and startling than that which came to them one evening during that week, when the chapel door opened and Stella Brown entered with her father. And the surprise and interest was deepened, when Mr. Brown spoke of his new-found belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, and his determination to spend the rest of his life in His service. Of those present, only Dr. Roberts and Stella knew of the wonderful change which had taken place in the once proud, scoffing infidel, hence the great surprise.

The second week, the young people took up the work of conducting the meetings; and the effort to bring souls into the kingdom was not in vain. To write the story of that week would be to write volumes, and even then it would be impossible to tell the story. God was very gracious unto the voice of their cry, and the sacred influences of the hour and place closing about unsaved souls, while the Holy Spirit pressed home the truth. Many were constrained to seek to enter the kingdom.

Meantime, Mr. Baxter had left town, gone no one knew where. Many prayers were offered for him, that he might be convinced of his error and led into the light of the truth as set forth in the gospel; yet, even as upon that day when Peter appeared among his praying friends, there

was great surprise when one evening Mr. Baxter appeared in the meeting, and said, "Members of the Christian Endeavor Society, and friends, I have a story to tell you!"

CHAPTER XXV.

"Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief."

BY this time, St. Paul's had grown quite accustomed to strange happenings; so many wonderful things had come to them that they had learned to say, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." And although they were deeply moved at the story which Mr. Baxter had to tell, there were hearts there who could say, "We expected something like this," and it was added to the long list of mercies for which they were in these days rendering praises.

The office-boy said: "It has come a little quicker than I expected, but I knew that it was coming!"

Fred Castleton said: "I have been so troubled because Mr. Baxter was out of town, but it seems that I need not have been disturbed. I ought to have remembered that the Holy Spirit could follow him."

But you have not heard the story; I shall tell it to you, not in his own words, but simply and briefly as I can. Mr. Baxter had for some

time contemplated a vacation trip, and having grown weary of his surroundings and conceived a dislike for the society which seemed to be closing about him on all sides, and coming to feel that he could not breathe freely in that atmosphere, he suddenly determined to carry out his project at once, and without any leave-takings, or without making known his plans further than to notify his landlady that he should be absent several weeks, and to give his office-boy leave of absence, he closed his office and departed. As he sat in the car waiting for the train to move, a bit of a conversation floated up to him from the platform.

"You'll be back to-morrow?"

"Yes, I expect so."

"All right!" said the first speaker. "You'll lead the Christian Endeavor meeting, then?"

At this moment the train moved out of the depot, and Mr. Baxter said within himself, "Well, I trust this is the last I shall hear of that society for a month! It seems as though the words Christian Endeavor haunted me by day and by night! They could not even let me depart in peace, but must needs let those be the last words I should hear! A sort of farewell they thought to give me, I suppose! But I do not believe any of them will follow me!" And so he journeyed on quite complacently. Mr.

Baxter would scarcely have owned that he was running away from the Christian Endeavor idea; and, indeed, I am not sure that such was quite the case. He was running away from himself, trying to get away from an uneasiness and restlessness which had somehow taken possession of him. He could not tell whence it came, but he had been able to convince himself that a change was desirable, and this he was after. Would he find it, or would the unrest and dissatisfaction follow him?

The hours rolled away. Towards night a party of happy young people took possession of the seats opposite our traveller. Once he thought he heard the words "Christian Endeavor," and he turned to make sure that none of the party were from St. Paul's. And finding them to be all strangers, he concluded that either he had not heard aright, or that the words were used in some other connection than that to which they were set in his thoughts; and he gave himself again to his reading.

The next evening found him a thousand miles from home. He had made one or two hotel acquaintances, with whom he sat at the supper-table. His neighbor, an elderly gentleman, addressing a young man who sat opposite, said, "Are you going to the concert this evening?"

"No," replied the young man; "or, I may

drop in rather late; it is Christian Endeavor evening."

"Yes, I remember," replied the older man.

"Christian Endeavor!" exclaimed Mr. Baxter. "I supposed I had got away from that."

"You will have to travel a long ways to accomplish that feat!" responded the young man.

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Baxter.

"Why, I mean that you will almost have to go out of the world, if you want to get away from the idea, for the societies are springing up all over."

"The growth is simply wonderful!" said the older gentleman.

Mr. Baxter was silent; he dared not venture a further remark, lest he should show himself more ignorant than he cared to; but he was thinking there was more to this thing than he had known.

"Will you go to the concert with me?" asked one.

"Or to the meeting, with me?" asked the other, smiling.

"Thank you both," responded Mr. Baxter; "but I think I will not go out, if you will excuse me."

"As you please," replied the young man. "I am obliged to go down town first; but if

you wanted to go, I would come back here for you."

"Thank you; but I think I will stay in my room."

An hour later, Mr. Baxter stepped out upon the balcony in front of the parlors, thinking to take an airing before going to bed. He paced up and down the narrow space, congratulating himself upon the fact that he was sufficient unto himself; that he needed neither the concert for entertainment, nor the prayer-meeting as a moral stimulant. He exulted in his strength, in his high standard of morality; he believed that, unlike his friend Brown, he would meet life's trials, and even face death, with supreme indifference.

A church-bell rang, near by; another a little farther away, and still another rang out its invitation loud and clear. And Mr. Baxter said: "I think this must be a city of churches. People ought to be very religious here; but I do not see that the churches make much impression upon vice here, or anywhere else."

Then there came to him one of those questioning thoughts that come to us in hours of revery, What if all the Christian churches were blotted out? What if there were no Bible in the world,—no belief in Christ? What, indeed? What if all the world should adopt his

creed, — should rest upon their morality? Well, he knew that, supposing, for an instant, that morality were a safe thing to lean upon, still a large proportion of mankind would have but a broken reed to rest upon. After all, the Bible, and the doctrines which the people who believe in it were accustomed to draw from it, might have their uses in restraining people who had not reached this high standard of morality. No, on the whole, it would not do to blot out, even were it possible, the churches and the Bible.

And now the bell tolls! Shall he follow the sound? The idea of sleep has departed from him. He thinks he will take a walk. And something prompts him to follow the sound of that tolling bell. Queer, but to-night he remembers the bell in the village church, in the place where his boyhood was spent. It seems as though it were the same bell, the sound of which he was now following. He had not decided to enter the church, but as he reached the door others were entering, and, as if in a dream, he passed in with the rest, and was welcomed so warmly that he felt quite at home though he smiled as he thought, "Well, here I am, in exactly the same fix again!"

The topic for the evening was, "Oh, taste and see!"

The tender appeal made to those who might not know of the love of Christ came from a heart aglow with the love for souls, and, somehow, Mr. Baxter was strangely moved. The pastor greeted him at the close of the service, and, in the conversation which followed, Mr. Baxter said: "I wish I had this faith! My foundation-stones, which I thought were immovable, seem just ready to go down. Somewhere between the supper-table and this hour, my views have been greatly modified."

It was something of this, and a story of soul-struggle and of blessed victory, which Mr. Baxter had to tell that evening to the young people of St. Paul's.

"Do you ask," he said, "what has become of my infidelity? I answer, I do not know. It all melted away when I looked towards Calvary!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

INTO Mrs. Grenville's hospitable home there had come an unwelcome guest, — a guest which brought sorrow and anxiety to the heart of the mother, pain and suffering to the son; a guest which seemed to be the harbinger of a still more dread visitor. Disease had fastened itself upon the never very robust frame of Walter Grenville, and Death hovered near, as if waiting for his victim. Not suddenly had the fear clutched at the mother's heart. There were days of tender care and loving sympathy, while the fever slowly gathered strength; then one morning the physician in attendance said, "I think we should send to the city for a nurse."

Mrs. Grenville took the alarm. "Why, doctor! you have not led me to think that Walter is so very sick. Do you feel more anxious about him this morning?"

"No — not anxious exactly; but we have failed to get control of the fever, and it must run its course, and you ought not to think of

taking care of him through it. I assure you I see no special cause for alarm at present, but I insist that you shall have help."

And so the nurse was installed, and then there were more days of watching; and presently these grew to be days of anxious watching, as the fever fires burned fiercer and fiercer, and the patient had less and less strength to combat the disease. Instead of the morning call, the doctor came twice a day. The mother's heart was growing heavy with fear and dread; more earnestly she prayed for her boy's restoration to health, and in the Young People's Society many prayers were offered, both in public and in private, for this stricken and well beloved member. Yet steadily, as it appeared to the quiet and patient watchers, he descended into the valley and into the very shadow of death. It seemed as though the intent ear might almost hear the flow of the waters, and the strained vision see the angels waiting to bear the loved one over. For days, and yet other days, he lingered on the very border land, while the loving hearts were rent with anguish. Daily, almost hourly, bulletins were issued from the sick-room, to the same effect: —

"No change!" "Just about the same!" and sometimes there would be added, "Growing weaker, of course."

Meantime, Mrs. Grenville came to realize that her Lord was speaking to her. Into the quiet and hush which had fallen upon the household a voice came which spoke so loud and clear to the mother's conscience that it seemed to her that it must be audible to every one. Still, while she pleaded for her child's life, she continued to argue and compromise: surely, now that she had pledged herself to the support of a student through college, theological seminary, even gone farther than that, and promised to support that same student as a missionary, should he decide that to be his calling, surely the Lord would not deal so hardly with her as to take from her one joy, that which was her life! How earnestly she pleaded! How ready she became to renew her late consecration of her time, her means, her strength to the service of her Lord! How she promised that, if God would but hear her, and grant her request, she would be earnest and active in His vineyard! As the darkness gathered closer about her, as the end seemed to be approaching, her heart rebelled. She could not have it so! She would not be reconciled to give up her one boy! Could this be a loving Father who would do this thing? Why was He taking from her all that made her life worth living? What had she done? What did He

require of her? The rebellion of her heart rose higher, and she fairly exhausted herself in her cries of protest. Then came to her the memory of the words which had been spoken plainly to her, only a few weeks before — words of exhortation and of warning. The words sounded in her ear, "The Lord will one day claim His own. If you will not render unto Him 'that which thou owest,' one day you may find yourself deposed from your stewardship. He may take from you what you are not willing to use for Him."

Had that day come to her? Was God about to take from His unfaithful servant the child whom He had bidden her to train for Him? She had been recalling God's promises in regard to answering prayer, and had told herself that she had only to pray in faith, and she must receive an answer; for God had promised, and He never forgot or failed to keep His promises. And she had gone on sending up her petitions, growing strangely persistent, and wondering why no answer came. Indeed, sometimes she fiercely told herself that God *must* answer. She did not realize how selfishly she was seeking to use the power which rests in God's children. But, by degrees, she came to see her mistake, and to realize all her compromising efforts; and then she came to her Lord

with the cry, "Only give me back my boy, and and I give him to Thy service in whatever sphere Thou shalt direct! If Thou wilt restore him to me in health, I will not lay a straw in the way of his becoming a minister! Gladly will I give him to the work, if Thou wilt but hear me and grant my request!"

Again and again, she prayed this prayer, confessing, "I have held back a part of the price; I have not been willing to give my child to this special service. Forgive me, dear Lord, and accept my offering which I now lay upon the altar. Only hear me, as I solemnly vow, that, if Thou wilt restore my child, all that I have shall be Thine."

Oh, that spirit of compromise which was still dominant! Oh, that "If Thou wilt"! Even while this prayer was upon her lips, and while she felt that God ought to grant her this request, because of her asking in this spirit of willingness to do whatever might be required, the doctor, having made his evening call, stopped at the library door to speak to her.

"I cannot speak very encouragingly to-night," he said. "I do not say there is no hope, and we will not give up, but we must be prepared for whatever may be the outcome of this night. I shall come in about ten to spend the night."

The doctor's tones were tender and sympathetic, and there were tears in his eyes, but, to the sorrowing mother, he seemed hard and cruel. She turned from him in despair. Then God would not hear! Could it be that God had forsaken her? Would neither her sufferings nor her supplications move Him? For hours she sat alone with her sorrow, too weak, too despairing, to cry out.

The house was very still. The doctor had enjoined the utmost quiet, and everything had been arranged for carrying out the order so far as possible. Not a sound broke upon the stillness, yet, as though some one had spoken them in loud, clear tones, these words fell upon Mrs. Grenville's heart: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Could she? She remembered that it was the stricken patriarch who had spoken these words of confidence out of his sorrowing but faithful heart. Could *she* throw off this mantle of despair which had wrapped itself about her, and could she make a further sacrifice, even to the giving up of her boy? Could she breathe that prayer of submission, "Thy will be done"? Could she watch the light going out, and, leaning upon her Lord, say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him"?

It was past midnight when she glided into

the sick-room, and, motioning the nurse away, took her place to watch through the night the flickering breath of the child whom she had now given to the Lord, to hold *in life or in death.*

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Fear not, for I am with thee and will bless thee."

PERHAPS I cannot better gather up the threads of this series of sketches, in which I have tried to show you something of the practical workings of the Society of Christian Endeavor, than by giving you, somewhat in detail, the history of one day in the life of St. Paul's. A day which, while it had been anticipated as a sort of jubilee, gave so much more than it had promised, that at its close, there were many to echo the words of Clara Randall, who, drawing a deep breath, said, "I did not realize that this was to be such a wonderful day!"

Again the church had been made bright with flowers. Rare plants from Mrs. Grenville's conservatory stood side by side with old-fashioned tea-roses and geraniums, which had been tenderly cared for in humbler homes; loving hearts and skilful fingers had thus combined to fill the house of prayer with fragrance and beauty.

It was the first Sabbath of the month, when Christians are accustomed to gather around the

table spread with the emblems of His love and sacrifice. Always a day of peculiar interest to the loyal Christian heart, when the church has the privilege of welcoming to her communion those who come for the first time, the occasion becomes possessed of an added interest and deeper joy. To St. Paul's there had come a day of great ingathering.

Among those who came for the first time to sit at the table of their Lord, were gray-headed men and women. One of these, a dear old grandmother, in telling at the preparatory service the story of how she had been led, said, "My little granddaughter has for several months been interested in the Young People's Society, and always came home telling how full the room was, and what good meetings they had. A few weeks ago, she began coaxing me to go with her to the meetings, and to please her I went; and when I heard even the children telling of their love for the Saviour, I began to feel that I had missed something out of my life, and I determined to gather up what I could of the treasure, in the little time I have left; and I am here to obey the command of the Saviour I have just found."

In that group of witnesses there were middle-aged men and women, — husbands and wives coming together. I need not tell you that Mr.

and Mrs. Brown were there, ready to take upon themselves vows of allegiance to the King they had so long opposed. Nor need I tell you that Mr. Baxter stood there, showing in his face and bearing the newness of life in which he was walking. Mr. Baxter was a constant wonderment to his friends. Very few of them understood him; they only knew of the rapid decisions at which he was arriving, and wondered thereat; they did not know of the struggles which preceded those decisions.

In that hour when, far from home, he was arrested in his life of rebellion, and led to renounce his unbelief, while he was convinced of the truth and in his heart accepted it, while he was ready to acknowledge Christ as a divine Saviour and his only hope, the duty of an active Christian life did not at first present itself to his mind and conscience; but as the days passed, and more and more of the love of Christ filled his heart, the thought came to him that he must do more than just to profess his faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Saviour of men. Having been all his life an opposer of the Christian religion, having denied and even ridiculed the Bible, ought he not now to become an open and constant advocate of its truths? Ought he not to make an effort to undo some of the mischief he had done? Ought he not

to give his whole life to the work of persuading men to repent and turn to the Lord? He seemed to hear a voice saying, "He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings."

He thought that this could not be, and he strove to put away the suggestion. He argued that Christian men in other professions were needed, that he was now past the flush of youth, that all his habits of life and thought unfitted him for the work of the gospel ministry; yet the thought persistently clung to him, the question would not stay argued. The command, "Go thou and preach the kingdom of God!" seemed imperatively addressed to him, and the difficulties which at first loomed up before him vanished when the multitude of promises were brought to bear upon them.

Afterwards some one asked, "Why did you determine to do this?"

And he replied, "Because I could not help it."

Once the question was decided, he was not long in taking steps preparatory to entering upon the work which was already becoming an all-absorbing thought. His fine education, his broad culture, his ability as a public speaker, were all so many helps, and would tend to shorten the time of preparation. It was not

until his arrangements were completed, that he went to call on Stella Brown. Of the particulars of this interview I have no knowledge, but it may be of interest to state that shortly after this period of which I write their engagement was formally announced.

While Christians rejoiced that Mr. Baxter was ready to consecrate his talents thus to the service of the Master, the world looked on and wondered how it could be that he was willing to give up his lucrative profession and his prospects of a distinguished career for the work of preaching the gospel. Some called him a fanatic, others called him fickle. Little the world knows of the motives that lie behind such sacrifices!

And there were circumstances which added to the weight of the sacrifice. Mr. Baxter was ambitious, and had worked hard in his office; and his reputation as a brilliant young man was such that already politicians had their eyes fixed upon him as one who would be likely to be a successful candidate, and had intimated to him that he might be offered the nomination for one of the most responsible State offices. Do you begin to appreciate the sacrifice? The world could appreciate that part, but the motive — that was the puzzling question. Whatever they might say or think, as he stood before that

congregation to take his vows of discipleship, with that look of calm determination, there was no regret in his heart, but rather joy, that he was permitted to make a sacrifice. But there were others in that group who had sacrificed their idols. One had worshipped at the shrine of popular amusements and had found it a real trial to put away that idol; another had bowed, aye, grovelled in the dust, before the demon of appetite for strong drink; but the grace of God had been sufficient for these, and, clothed and in their right minds, they sat at the feet of Jesus.

The work had not been confined entirely to the accustomed congregation of St. Paul's, but the influences of the weeks past had gone out and reached other neighborhoods. At The Mills whole families had embraced the truth. Family altars had been erected and homes cheered and brightened. The four faithful young people still labored in the Sunday-school at The Mills, and Flossie Miller had the joy of knowing that she had led Minnie Banks to the Saviour.

Only at the last, when secrets shall be revealed, will it be known how great and lasting were the results of the work in that desolate and godless neighborhood. But when these new witnesses for Christ had entered upon their

solemn obligations, and when the church had welcomed them; when they had covenanted together, and sat together at the table of the Lord; and when they had sung a hymn and gone out, — the day of joyful experiences was not ended. The evening hours brought fresh cause for gratitude for the past mercies, joy in the present and encouragements for the future.

It was the anniversary of the Y. P. S. C. E.; and, as it was also their consecration evening, they determined to unite the two services. At an early hour they gathered in the church for the roll-call. The audience-room was filled, chairs in the aisles being found necessary in order to accommodate the crowds of people who came to witness the rather novel exercises of the evening.

During the year several neighboring churches had caught the idea, and organized Christian Endeavor Societies. These had been invited to send delegates, so that, with the young people, the older members of the church and congregation, and the visitors, the church was crowded to its utmost capacity.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"And thou shalt rejoice in the feast."

WHAT a wonderful hour was that for St. Paul's! Those whose names had been upon the society-roll from the beginning renewed their consecration with joyful hearts, while many others now responded to the roll-call for the first time; and as Dr. Roberts listened to these responses his own heart thrilled with gladness; it seemed as though a long, dark night had passed, and the brightest morning he had ever known had dawned.

Many touching testimonies were given. One young lady said, "It is now several years since I gave my heart to Christ and began to live for Him; but within the last few weeks I have realized that I needed a fresh supply of consecrating grace, and it has seemed to me that I heard the Master's voice bidding me 'Come up higher'; and to-night the language of my heart is: —

"'Nearer, my God, to thee,
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me.'"

One who had just found Christ said, "'And when they had lifted up their eyes they saw no man save Jesus only.'"

And that young girl who, in the earlier days of the society's existence, found her courage failing whenever she attempted even to repeat a passage of Scripture in fulfilment of her pledge, rising in that large audience as her name was called, said:—

"I praise God to-night for answers to prayer; some for whom I have been praying have been constrained to enter into the fold, and I want now to consecrate my life anew to Christ's service."

Fred Castleton, who, in days not so very long past, thought the pastor ought to lead all the meetings, was himself the leader of this one, and so accustomed had he become to the work that he showed not the slightest embarrassment. Parker Johnson, who would not join at first because he could not take the prayer-meeting pledge, stood up and led the congregation in prayer, and to the great surprise of himself and friends. While Mr. Burrill, who waited to see if the society held on its way, paid a glowing tribute to the strength and usefulness of the organization.

Walter Grenville was rapidly convalescing, and, though unable as yet to be among them, sent his message, and it was this:—

"More than ever before I desire to be used by the Master, and the life which He has given back to me from the border-land I renewedly consecrate to His service."

Edith Castleton, to whom life had taken on a new meaning, whose every thought and impulse was now controlled by a new purpose, said: "To consecrate means to set apart; and this is my desire, to be set apart; to be a chosen vessel for the Master's use." And so on to the end of the list. It was good to be there, good to listen to those young disciples speaking words of praise, of testimony, of renewed consecration.

The roll-call was followed by the reports of secretary and treasurer. These were brief and much to the point, as such reports should be, showing the increase in membership, the transfer of associate members to active, the additions to the church from the society, the success of the plan of systematic giving, as well as other matters of interest.

The president's address was a setting forth of the plan and aims of the organization, and not a few people were considerably enlightened thereby. I am able to give this address to you in part, as follows: —

"Members of the Society of Christian Endeavor, and friends: That so many have gathered

here to-night to join us in a fitting recognition of our first anniversary is evidence of an interest in our undertaking which is, to us who entered upon the work with fear and trembling, gratifying in the extreme. To one and all a hearty welcome; you have come to the anniversary of the Y. P. S. C. E. It may be that to some these letters, which you see before you done in evergreen, are a mystery; you wonder what is hidden behind them!

"In one of our religious weeklies there appeared not long ago a criticism upon the use of initial letters to designate various organizations. It may not be in good taste always, and some may even consider this an unhappy combination; but to those to whom the letters have grown familiar from constant and loving use, the arrangement is not unpleasant, nor the meaning obscure. To any who may be unfamiliar with the origin and history of our society let me explain, briefly.

"In February, 1881, Rev. F. E. Clark, then of Portland, Maine — you know several good things have originated in Maine, and our society had its beginning there in this wise: —

"This good pastor found himself struggling with a problem. How to train in Christian activity a number of young people who had recently entered upon the new life, was a question which called for an answer.

"By what seems to those who have watched the growth of the idea, a divine inspiration, the plan of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor was presented to his mind; and in his church, the Williston Church of Portland, the first local society was organized with a membership of about sixty. A neighboring pastor caught the idea, and then others, until at the end of the year there were four societies; at the end of the second year there were fifty-six; and now we count them by hundreds, and the membership by thousands and tens of thousands! Think of it — thousands upon thousands of young people all over the world pledged to attend and take part in a weekly prayer-meeting!

"The four societies held a conference at the end of the year, the fifty-six followed the example and published a report of their proceedings, and since then the work has gone rapidly forward. As Mr. Clark says, 'The work has always pushed them, not they the work.' The Y. P. S. C. E. is no longer an experiment. It is an established means of Christian nurture. From its first inception the divine favor has evidently followed and rested upon it.

"These local societies are in churches of almost every denomination, in nearly if not quite

every State in the Union, in the Territories, in the Dominion of Canada, in the Islands of the Indian Archipelago, in China, and in Honolulu. We belong to a widely scattered family. Our influence is felt in every land.

"And now do you ask our aim? One thing it is not. It is not entertainment! We have entertainments, but as one has said of them, 'They are not the chief element of our success; they are the out-goings of a religious life, but they do not originate it; neither do they constitute it.' Young people must have something to do; if they do not find work in the church they will find it elsewhere. It has by actual experiment been demonstrated, that by means of this organization our young people may be reached and may be shown how to use their energies for the church, that they may be kept so busy as to have neither time nor energies for the things that would lead them astray. A writer of Christian Endeavor literature gives five characteristics of the society which I will recapitulate very briefly.

"1. The combining of Christian activity with religious instruction and the giving of Christian testimony. You may have observed that this giving of testimony is one of our strong points.

"2. The affording to our young people fre-

quent opportunities for pronouncing themselves for Christ.

"3. The advantages of thorough organization. We might give many illustrations of the truth that organized effort is more effective than single-handed efforts, but I think we all appreciate the fact, as it is one which is demonstrated in every-day life.

"4. The self-imposed discipline of regular attendance upon the prayer-meeting and participation in its exercises.

"5. The recognition of the social life, and its subordination to the Christian life.

"A little over a year ago few of us had ever heard of the Society of Christian Endeavor; and when we were so fortunate as to become acquainted with the workings of one society we supposed it to be a local organization, until one memorable day when light broke in upon us! We are wiser now. We know what the letters stand for! they stand for earnest effort! for stronger faith! for more willingness to witness for Christ! for more voices heard in the prayer-meeting! for a more prayerful spirit! for missionary zeal, and for generous systematic giving as an act of worship! In short, they stand for growth!

"Now I want to read to you some brief extracts from the religious press, from the testi-

mony of pastors, associations, and synods. Many pastors speak to this effect: 'We find this society of inestimable importance in training Christian workers and prayer-meeting supporters. It should have the sympathy and support of our churches and of our religious papers, because of its loyalty to Jesus Christ, and to His church, and because of the quality and abundance of its fruit.'

"One who is in a position to know of this matter, says, 'Many times has the personal testimony been given that the Society of Christian Endeavor has been the life of some church and the most encouraging feature in the religious outlook of the community. These organizations have been referred to in religious conventions of the different denominations, as special causes of religious interest, as a constant power for good, as schools for Christian nurture. These words would not have been spoken, if the societies represented had not been doing praiseworthy service in and for the churches with which they are connected.'

"A writer of Sunday-school lessons in one of our leading journals says, 'The Society of Endeavor has been a great help to us, developing the piety and talents of the young and uniting them in work; also making a centre towards which unconverted youth are drawn.' In

another paper this appeared: 'It — the society — is no more distinct from the church than the primary department is distinct from the church Sunday-school; it is in the closest relation to the church; is simply the church at work in this particular direction, and is to-day the very hope of the church.'

"If there is skepticism as to the wisdom and usefulness of the organization, it must be with those who have not tested it. Some one has said, 'It is a good thing if it works.' Well, it does work; it has worked in large churches and in small churches. The largest society I have seen reported has one hundred and eighty-eight members, the smallest five.

"And now, dear Christian friends, we have tried to set forth the origin and the aims of our society, and have tried to tell you something of its largeness, and of its progress, as these topics seemed fitting for the occasion of our first public anniversary. As we review the year's work, while we find only partial success in any direction, we rejoice that even in the busiest seasons, when heart, and brain, and body grow weary, our prayer-meeting attendance has not fallen off, and that there has been a constantly growing interest. We believe that the Lord has added His blessing to our endeavor, and we pray that the society may become a

tremendous power for good in this church and community. We bespeak the prayers and counsel of older Christians in the future as in the past. Be patient with our mistakes, rejoice in our success, and pray for us continually.

"And now to members of the society one word. I would sum up all in this injunction — Make Christ first, always and everywhere. There is an enthusiasm that goes with organization; we have much of it, and it is a good thing; it helps over hard places; but, back of all, there must be earnest, consecrated Christian lives. We may not depend upon committees to do our individual work; there is a duty and responsibility resting upon each one. Many of us are at the very threshold of Christian experience; this is a good time, by all these means put within our reach, to so link ourselves with Christ, so identify ourselves with His people, that nothing shall be able to draw us away from the love of God — no allurement of pleasure, of gain or of ambition shall have power to tempt us from our allegiance. And if we have not until now been fully the Lord's, trusting Christ fully, showing our love and obedience in all our conduct, let us now, at the beginning of this second year of endeavor, purpose in our hearts this consecration, this service, this trust, from this time forth, not for a month or for a year, but for evermore."

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Behold My servants shall sing for joy of heart."

DELEGATES from neighboring societies which had been organized during the year were present, and their reports added to the pleasure and interest of the evening. One reported in this wise: —

"Last August I came by invitation of Dr. Roberts into your consecration meeting, and so impressed was I with the spirit manifested, and the signs of spiritual advancement which I saw, that I made some inquiries concerning the organization, and took away with me a copy of the constitution. Subsequently, I called a meeting of my own young people, and, after some discussion in regard to the name, we organized, embodying in our constitution all the main features of yours, and calling ourselves Church Workers. We went on finely for two or three months, when one day, in conversation with your president, I discovered to my great astonishment that there was more to the matter than I had supposed. I found out that there was something to belong to; and I immediately

laid the matter before our young people, confessing my own ignorance which had led them into an error; and we speedily put ourselves in a shape to belong to the general society. Speaking from a pastor's standpoint, I can say that I should dislike very much to work in a church that had not a Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor."

"I too have a bit of experience to relate," said the next speaker. "Like my brother, I have had a revelation, but it has only this evening come to me. For more than a year we have had in our church what we called a Society of Christian Endeavor, and I came here in response to your invitation prepared to report. But after what I have heard to-night I do not feel inclined to do so. I did not know until this evening that there was a general plan of organization and work. We borrowed the name because it struck our fancy, but did not take up the general system, because we did not know there was such a thing. We have only one committee, which we style an executive committee; their work has been altogether of a social nature. We have no prayer-meeting, and I have never until to-night heard of the prayer-meeting pledge. I am glad I came here. You will hear from us again, I trust when we shall have become *true Christian Endeavorers*."

Another reported thus: "We are, I think, the youngest of all; we have not yet attained to the dignity of an anniversary, nor even reached the point of a first roll-call. We organized two weeks ago; through the efforts of your secretary we were led to take the step. We have already grown from twenty members to fifty. And our plans of work are spreading out in many directions. Further on we may report progress."

Presently one arose who was recognized by only a few, so long had he been away, and so changed was he. He said:—

"I come to you to-night bearing the greetings of a Society of Christian Endeavor from away beyond the Mississippi! Your president has spoken of the meaning of these letters before us, done, as they should be, in unfading evergreen! My friends, I tell you the letters mean a great deal to me! I was lost, undone, wellnigh utterly ruined, and all but gone over the precipice, when the young people of the Christian Endeavor Society gathered around me and, almost against my will, saved me! I assure you had it not been for this western sister society in whose name I come, I should not be here to-night telling the story of my rescue! The Lookout Committee is well named, but it sometimes, yes oftentimes, might well be

called the *Rescue Committee!* Thank God for the Y. P. S. C. E."

And as Frank Miller sat down, more than one of that audience wiped away the tears and thanked God for this rescue of their old friend and companion.

But there was still another exercise upon that varied programme. The hour came when the younger people gave way to the pastor, officers, and others among the older members of the church. These were asked to speak of the society from their standpoint.

Dr. Roberts spoke, with evident feeling, of the help and comfort it had been to him. He said, "It is impossible to overestimate the importance of training the young Christian. It is a fact that training has much to do in the line of developing talent. Because a child has no special aptitude for figures, we do not, therefore, conclude that it is not worth while that he should be taught arithmetic, and how often it turns out that faithful teaching, with earnest effort upon the part of the pupil, develops a latent and hitherto unrecognized talent in that very direction. And shall we be less wise in the spiritual realm? Shall our young Christians plead want of aptitude for Christian work, and shall we accept the plea, and leave them to a dwarfed and narrow spiritual life? Not so,

thought our brother, the father of this institution; he saw the need of tender and careful nursing of the young life dawning in those who are born of the Spirit, and in order to keep the atmosphere warm about these little ones he thought out this scheme, which has proved such a blessing to the world. And now it seems strange to us that men were so slow to recognize this unused power in the church. I am glad that we are coming to appreciate and to use the power that there is in consecrated Christian *young* manhood and *young* womanhood, aye, and in consecrated Christian childhood!"

Mrs. Grenville said, "I want to pay my tribute of love to this band of workers. Through the influences brought to bear upon my heart and life, coming perhaps more indirectly than directly, yet none the less coming from you, I have become what I was not before, a consecrated Christian. All that I am and all that I have, even my only child, I have laid upon the altar. And I praise God to-night that when I would have kept back part of the price, He was merciful and gave me a place for repentance."

The pastor of a neighboring church said:—

"I congratulate Brother Roberts upon having this band of workers to gather around him,

ready to co-operate with him, and able and willing to supplement his work in a way that has already been productive of wonderful results. I confess that I have doubted the wisdom of the stringent prayer-meeting pledge, and I have been unable to discern any good which might grow out of the frequent roll-calls or consecration meetings. I thought that these would soon become a mere form, and so tend to bring cold formality into the life of the young Christian; but I am convinced that there is something in it beyond all human planning, and that the Lord, having added His blessing, is able to keep the hearts of our children and youth from pride and formality. My skepticism upon the subject has vanished. I only wish we were organized and ready for work."

Mr. Collins said, "I shall have to make a confession, and ask these young folks to forgive me! I thought you were all having just a good time among yourselves. I did not believe in you at all, as some of you know. I have seen you going in and out, and heard something of your doings, but I took little interest in the matter. To be sure, I have been interested in your quarterly payments into the treasury of the church; but I thought that was only for once or twice. I did not suppose you would keep it up. Well, forgive me, and accept my

congratulations, and let me assure you that hereafter you will not be forgotten in my prayers."

Colonel Hicks arose with his usual loftiness of manner. But since that evening, months ago, when he had gone over to the side of the society, and bidden them God-speed, the young people had ceased to smile at Colonel Hicks's somewhat pompous carriage. Indeed they had unconsciously given it a new name. It was now self-possession and dignity, and some of them wondered that they had never before known what a great loving heart he carried under that haughty exterior. The spirit of criticism was fast giving way before the Christian graces which were springing up in their hearts. "I want to ask my brethren," he began, "those who have so long officially carried the interests of this church as a burden which sometimes has rested heavily upon all our hearts, if our problem has not been solved? We have no longer need to ask, How shall we draw the young people into the church, and how shall we hold them? The solution is before us. Like my Brother Collins, I was skeptical as to the good of this new venture; but months ago I saw my error, and as I have watched the progress of the movement, and seen the mighty uplifting power exerting its influence here, in this church and

in this community, — as I have seen the young followers of Christ growing in Christian experience, and have heard souls inquiring the way of life, — my heart has been thrilled with joyful emotions, and I have thanked God for this agency which has been set going in our midst, and which is at work in other places; and I call upon you, my brethren, to join with me in endorsing this organization, and in giving encouragement and aid, as may from time to time lie in our power; and to join with me in giving to these young people the help of our earnest prayers. And to the young people I say, God bless you and keep you, and may the Holy Spirit dwell in you, working in you and through you to the glory of God."

"Just one word more," said Fred Castleton, rising as the last speaker ended: "We appreciate the encouraging words of our friends, and we are helped by them, and encouraged to go on, looking hopefully into the future. But now, dear fellow workers, let us not allow ourselves to be lifted up by words of praise; let us keep ourselves humble, and to do this we must keep near the cross. It seems to me that just here lies our greatest danger, — that we become puffed up. Let us remember that whatever we have accomplished in the past, whatever we may be permitted to do in the future, is not of

ourselves, but is of the Lord our God. Now let us sing, in closing,

"'All hail the power of Jesus' name.'"

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